

Quick Introduction:

This fic is something I'm doing in response to Jayu's "Dark Harry" challenge (Found on Portkey's forums under Harry/Hermione Challenges). I've never written a Darkfic before, so I thought I'd give this a quick go. It's only a "I'm bored" fic, so while I will finish it, I don't intend for it to be as in depth as the other fanfiction I'm working on. The challenge that Jayu gave is given as follows (reinterpreted to fix spelling mistakes and improve clarity):

The summer after Harry's fifth year finds him becoming increasingly enraged and grief stricken. He becomes tempted to use the dark arts, but resists. At this point, Harry must not be thinking romantic thoughts of Hermione.

A week prior to going back to Hogwarts, Ron asks Hermione if they could date, which Hermione must refuse.

By the time Harry makes his way back to Hogwarts, he is fully immersed in the Dark Arts. By this point, you may start building a relationship between Harry and Hermione.

A month after starting Hogwarts, (spent however you wish), Hermione finds out what Harry has been learning and practicing. She learns of his past (all of it), including the things that Dumbledore has done to him and the things he has sacrificed.

They both join Voldemort, but do not take the Dark Mark and spend the rest of the year training.

At the end of the year, Ronald makes a second attempt to have Hermione go out with him, she refuses him again as she has already gotten together with Harry. Because of this, Ron is enraged and attempts to use an Avada Kedavra on her out of Jealousy.

Harry and Hermione elope for the holidays, and when they arrive back at Hogwarts, they are surrounded by a overwhelming dark aura.

They allow Voldemort to think that he is in control of them, but they soon overthrow him, taking his place together and then wage war on the Ministry..

I hope you enjoy reading my fanfiction as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

Disclaimer:

Harry Potter is owned by a potentially mythical creature named J.K. Rowling. While it is widely accepted that such a creature exists, Luna Lovegood has never once found one. If Luna, you do ever find her, just let her know that I'm not making any profit off her characters and just poking a bit of fun.

Chapter 1 - Deceit...

Harry laid on the bed, nursing his latest bruise, a purple stain on his cheek, curtesy of one Vernon Dursley.

Professor Albus Dumbledore had appeared at Privet Drive a few days earlier and Harry had no recollection of what happened that day. He didn't know why, it was an unusual and odd feeling.

Ever since that day, Vernon had hit him continually whenever he saw Harry; if Harry didn't leave his room that day, then Vernon would beat down his door and confront Harry in his room.

Whether or not his current treatment was a direct result of Dumbledore or the fact that Vernon had come to a realisation or something during the conversation they inevitably held, Harry wasn't sure. All that mattered to him at the moment was that it hurt.

Harry lamented the loss of his Godfather. If Sirius were still alive, he could write to him and have the order straighten Vernon out to at least the way he was before. But instead, the order had turned a blind eye to his plight, despite him writing every day to them. It was enough to make Harry believe that Mundungus Fletcher was in charge of the Order's mail.

There was a scratch at the window and Harry scurried to open his window to let in the owl before it created such a fuss that would have Vernon rain down a thunderstorm of 'discipline' on his broken umbrella of an ego.

The owl was quite aggravated as it had a rather heavy parcel it was carrying. It was quite quick to land and as Harry moved to untie the present, the bird nipped at his hand, and not friendly in the way that Hedwig often did, the owl latched on and didn't let go until it had drawn blood.

After that, it turned around and as Harry untied the gift, it left a white stain on his hand.

Harry glared at the bird but did not feel stupid enough to abuse the owl as he desperately wanted to do.

Still, he managed to shove the bird out of his window again without any further wounds and turned to the gift. On the brown wrapping was attached a gift card that read "To Harry Potter, from your biggest fan."

He pondered over the identity of the person and figured that it was probably someone he'd never met before. He slowly opened the parcel and was faced with a black book with no label. It had a red spine that was decorated with vines that curved around the front and back a little and solid gold corners.

It was by no means a cheap book, no matter who gave it to him. He tentatively opened the book and was greeted with a stylised title. An introduction to understanding and using the Dark Arts by Maed Hattier. Harry snapped the book closed. That was the last kind of book that he wanted to read! Why not a book on occlumency or duelling theory?

Harry emptied out the bin in his room and placed the book in the bottom before placing the rubbish on top. He would dispose of the book as soon as he could.

'Who would send me a book on the Dark Arts though? It certainly wouldn't be Hermione... I can't think of anybody else who'd give it to me... Though perhaps Moody sent it to me to understand what I'm up against.'

He put it out of his mind and left to do the chores that Vernon had lain out alongside his bruised face.

"BOY! Do you call this kitchen clean?"

Harry looked around frantically. He was sure he'd left the room spotless.

"There's a broken plate in here!"

"Wha-?"

SMASH! Vernon threw the plate on the ground and glared at him.

"That's not fair!" Harry protested. "I just finished cleaning the kitchen!" He immediately realised his mistake.

"Obviously you didn't clean it up well enough did you?" His uncle glared at him. "Clean it up properly!" He said grabbing Harry by the scruff of the neck and throwing him on top of the pieces of broken china.

Harry bit his teeth as the shards pierced his hands. He didn't scream, but it was a tough effort to avoid it.

'Come on Harry, after the cruciatus, this is nothing.' He told himself as he gingerly peeled himself off the floor and tried to pull on a shard that had somehow pierced right through the webbing of his left hand.

Vernon kicked him in the side.

"Pick them off the floor first, then you can clean up your hands, and there better not be a drop of blood on the floor when you're done." He

said as he sat down at the table with a large grin on his face and watched.

‘One day... One day uncle Vernon...’ he swore to himself.

As Harry stumbled up the stairs with tissues pressed against his hand, he cursed his situation. He had to leave. He couldn’t stay here, blood protection or no. It meant absolutely nothing to be protected from Voldemort if he couldn’t save himself from his Uncle.

He pressed his hand against his bedroom door and hissed as he felt a tiny chip still in his hand dig a little further in. He quietly moved to the bathroom and took a pair of tweezers from there before closing his bedroom door.

He grabbed a cloth from his cupboard and gagged himself from it, and then set about the task of removing the slivers from within his own flesh before he could bandage his hand again.

When he was finally done, he bandaged his hand as best he could. It was bleeding so much, but Hermione had told him that applying pressure would help.

‘Even when you’re not here, you’re helping me.’ He smiled wryly as he let out a breath of relief that the ordeal was over... for now.

Harry still couldn’t believe the change in Vernon, how could he even think to do the cruel things he had done; it was beyond inhuman!

The shattered plate was the worst thing so far, but Harry knew that worse was yet to come. He needed to escape from this place, and soon, before either Vernon killed him or...

Harry glanced at the bin. No, he wouldn’t reach for that book. Instead, he reached for his quill and started writing.

Please help me. I can’t take this much longer. He hurts me every day now! You promised me you’d help!

His tears smudged the ink as he wrote, but he didn't care. He'd send the message as soon as Hedwig got back from delivering his letters.

He waited, and waited. As he waited, he thought about his uncle. "Maybe I could make him weightless and tie his toes to the ceiling fan..."

"... or perhaps I could increase his weight and use him as a wrecking ball."

His ideas only got more and more ridiculous from there and soon enough, he found himself snickering at his ideas and became more relaxed.

He sighed when he ran out of ideas, and at that moment, decided that it couldn't hurt to look at that book. Just looking at it wouldn't force him to use the spells... and it would allow him a better understanding of the arsenal at the Death Eater's disposal.

He pulled it out of the bin and flicked to the first page and started reading.

The introduction was boring as any lecture given by Professor Binns, but that was only to be expected. It gave the obligatory definition of Dark Arts which had been covered thoroughly enough by Quirrell.

The first chapter of the book was a lot more practical, but not very imaginative. Using stunners with an intent to kill, basic severing charms, (which were taught in Hogwarts as household spells for cooking and such), and a couple of shields which were of very little interest to Harry at all.

The second chapter of the book piqued Harry's interest. It covered the idea of using non-illegal spells and using them as Dark Arts. He quite liked the idea of using the heavy duty dish cleaning charm to scrub Vernon's skin raw until he bled to death.

He found himself getting quite involved in the book and felt rather amused by the time that Hedwig finally came home, halfway through the second chapter.

Tied to the snowy owl's leg was a letter from Hermione and also the Daily Prophet.

Harry was surprised to see a Daily Prophet as he had long since cancelled his subscription to them. He assumed that Hermione had sent it along with her letter and so read it first.

Harry,

I hope that when you read this letter and the second page article you don't think I'm crazy.

I'm not sure how it happened, but our episode at the Ministry a few weeks ago seems to have been completely forgotten and downplayed by the whole wizarding world!

I've written to Neville and spoken to Ron and Ginny and nobody at all remembers what happened!

When I asked what they remembered about the time they said they were all at school!

I'm certain that it happened. I remember it so vividly when you told me that Sirius had fallen through the veil. Please tell me that it wasn't all a lie. I refuse to believe that he was hit by a car!

Harry's hands tightened around the paper. '... Hit by a car! He died trying to help me!'

I think I'm perhaps starting to go crazy. Everyone I know is convinced that it never happened. And then there is the paper...

Harry, please write back to me, let me know that I'm not insane! The scar down my chest is a constant reminder of what happened that night, and I know for a fact that it's not something that happened three years ago like my parents were telling me!

Yours truly,

Hermione

“What the hell is going on?” Harry asked himself as he read it over a second time and then turned his attention to the newspaper.

“What the— Ministry broken into— Schoolboy deviant Harry Potter broke into the ministry declaring that You-Know-Who is back— Minister insists that he is not— Potter recommended for mind healer treatment.”

“What in the name of Merlin?” He screamed, louder than he meant to. He waited for Vernon to come screaming up the stairs, but it never happened.

He scanned the rest of the paper quickly.

“Laundering charges against Malfoy dropped— Lucius Malfoy got away scott free?” Harry’s eyes started leaking tears, and then he saw it, the one headline he could not bear to read a second time. “Sirius Black found dead in middle of road.”

“... No...” Harry pleaded. He remembered so vividly that night. It seemed cruel to downplay Sirius’ death to being hit by a car! That was not what he deserved!

Whoever did this— atrocity, would pay!

Harry’s reply to Hermione was simple and short.

I remember everything

From Harry.

He started reading the book again, this time however, he had a completely different focus. This was not one of childish amusement, part of him was looking for something useful.

Two days later, Harry awoke to find a rather official looking letter on his desk. Inside was a request for his presence to the reading of Sirius' will. He was notified that he would be escorted to the place by one Remus Lupin.

At the thought of this, the first thing that Harry thought was that he needed to hide his book. If he was found with that book, Remus would ask him some very uncomfortable questions.

Harry was in the middle of breakfast when Remus arrived, knocking on the front door.

Petunia answered the door and very politely let Harry's ex-professor in. This as well was very odd as Remus was dressed little better than a man off the street.

"Harry, are you ready to go?"

"I was ready before I got here." He said more angrily than he had meant to as he slammed his cutlery on the table and strode straight out of the door.

Remus nodded slightly to the Dursleys and followed him out.

Remus reached out for Harry's shoulder, but Harry stopped him.

"Remus, what's this crap about Sirius being hit by a car? I know that he died falling through the veil in the Department of Mysteries!"

Remus shook his head sadly. "Dumbledore told me you'd taken this really hard... You and Hermione both. I assure you, he was definitely hit by a car, I saw it with my own two eyes. Now, please Harry, this is painful enough as it is."

Remus words were enough, he started crying. 'This can't be happening.'

"Now Harry, I know that it's been hard for you... If it's alright, we're willing to have an appointment made for a Mind Healer for you."

Harry blinked his tears away, and a slow chuckle left him, which soon became a laugh. It wasn't a jovial laugh, it was one that marked that the teenage boy thought that something was so absurd that he couldn't help himself.

As his laugh faded away, he pointed to the fading bruise on his face and then held out his bandaged hands. "What I need Remus isn't healing in my mind, perhaps I have lost it a bit, but what I need is to be taken away from these... creatures! Look at me! My uncle did this to me!" He yelled at him. "Why hasn't the order lifted a finger to help me?"

Remus looked sad. "I suppose this is your way of dealing isn't it. Vernon has always been like this as long as I can remember. But unfortunately, he is your legal guardian. For us to take you away would be kidnapping."

Harry shook his head. He hadn't endured Vernon's punishments his whole life, he had only been like this as of a few weeks ago!

"I can't believe you're saying this. Look— Lets just forget all this and go."

Remus nodded and put a hand on Harry's shoulder, and with a pop, they disappeared.

'When I see Dumbledore, I'm going to give him the biggest earful he's ever heard!' He thought savagely to himself as they moved down the corridors down to where Sirius' will was being read.

There were a few people present, Hermione, Hagrid, Narcissa Malfoy, together with her son and a couple of people he didn't know. Remus moved to sit with Hagrid.

As soon as he walked in the door, Hermione smiled hopefully and approached him.

Harry gave a very slight shake of the head, that nobody would notice.

“Harry! What happened to your face!” She stared in horror. “And your hands! Merlin... What happened.”

“Vernon has been beating me.” Harry replied.

“And the order hasn’t stepped in?” She asked with her jaw hanging on its hinges.

“No, Remus just told me that they wouldn’t do anything because he is my legal guardian.”

Hermione stepped close. “If it were just me, I would doubt my sanity, but truth be told, I’m starting to think that everyone involved with the incident has been obliviated.”

“I remember that night far too vividly for that.” Harry said to her. “There’s something fishy going on. Vernon never beat me at all prior to about a week and a half ago, now he’s going out of his way to do it, but Remus seems to think that he’s been doing it for as long as he’s known Vernon.”

Hermione put on her thinking cap and bit her lip. “I still have a scar down my chest from where Dolohov got me.” She said, pointing to the small part of it you could see from her deliberately low-cut top.

“If I had gotten this scar three years ago, it wouldn’t look like it was recently inflicted.”

Harry nodded. “That’s enough evidence for me to know that it isn’t us that’s crazy. Though I’m going to go crazy if people don’t stop contradicting everything I say about the last few weeks, especially about Sirius.”

Hermione hugged Harry unexpectedly. “Thank you for being sane!” She said softly in his ear.

The door opened and they broke off the hug, the man who entered the room looked like he had once been a tall bloke, but had been squashed flat with a weight or something. He looked wider than he was tall.

“Everyone, please be seated.” He said as he stepped up to the podium. “We are here today to witness the reading of Sirius Black’s will. Those of you present are listed as being recipients of the will, or proxies on behalf of, said recipients.

“The will is quite short so this should only take a moment.

This is the last will of Sirius Black, whom I, in sound decision do give my assets to the following:

Remus Lupin, shall receive moneys, to the sum of fifteen thousand galleons, for being a dear friend.

Hermione Granger, to receive seven thousand galleons, for a life debt.

Professor Albus Dumbledore, to receive a hundred thousand galleons, for future charitable work.

Narcissa Malfoy, to receive a mouldy sandwich, which she left in the cooler of 12 Grimmauld Place.

Draco Malfoy gets nothing, sorry to make you come all this way.

And Finally, to Harry Potter, I grant ownership of Grimmauld Place and everything contained within, as long as he agrees to certain conditions, given separate. Otherwise, the property belongs to Albus Dumbledore.

Regardless, the title and honour of ‘Baron Black’ is given to Harry Potter. As was my wish to do when my charges are dropped.

Signed,

Sirius Black

Harry cried. It didn’t matter how Sirius had died, it suddenly hit him like a ton of bricks that Sirius was gone. He wasn’t going to just arrive wrapped in paper wrapping via an owl one day with a note attached saying ‘Ha! Fooled you! – Padfoot’

A piece of paper was pushed into Harry's field of vision and he looked up to see the squashed man thrusting what must have been the conditions to him owning Grimmauld Place.

He looked around the room briefly to see that the Malfoys were fuming over their part of the will, which made Harry smile. 'The last prank of the marauders.' He mused. 'A bit lame by their standards, but I suppose there's not much you can do at a will reading.'

He turned to read the paper that had been handed to him.

Harry, I'm entrusting all of my land and left over money to you, but you must promise to me that you will allow the order to continue using the place as a base of operations as long as they are active.

Oh, and if you could find a way to ditch Kretcher and that picture of my mother, that would be fantastic.

I'm sorry that something happened. I hope that however I died, it was for something useful.

-Sirius

"I— I accept." Harry replied softly. 'As much as I hate the order right now, perhaps it's not their fault.'

"Very well, then I announce you Baron Harry James Potter-Black."

"This is an outrage! I am alive! I should be the next in line for the title of Black!" Narcissa screamed.

"Missus Malfoy, you and I both know that this is well within Mister Black's rights." The man replied with a glare.

"This reading is now over."

Harry did not waste a second before leaving the place. He didn't want to be at the receiving end of Malfoy's tongue.

"I can't believe that he made you his heir!" Hermione exclaimed happily. "Oh, what an honour!"

"I'd give it all up to have him back Hermione." Harry replied sardonically.

"Of course you would Harry, so would I, but being the heir of Black carries a lot of privileges."

"I don't care about any of that Hermione, unless it will get me out of the Dursleys!"

Hermione smiled wryly. "I wish it did... I really do."

Harry sighed. "I don't want to go back Hermione... I'm scared."

"You should call the police when they aren't home." She told him. "It's child abuse what they're doing and you really shouldn't need to put up with it."

"I wish it were that easy, but they have one of those phones with a lock on them, I can't use it at all, and getting out of the house is nigh on impossible."

"How about at night?"

"They lock my door at night." Harry said shaking his head. "They don't want me to have contact with the outside world if they can avoid it."

Hermione thought for a little while. "I have an idea, but getting it will take some time and tact, give me a few days."

The door opened to reveal a lot of shouting happening from inside the room where the Malfoy family were throwing a fit over their lack of inheritance. Remus stepped out and when he closed the door, the shouting disappeared once more.

"Good old Sirius," Remus said fondly. "Lets go Harry, I'm afraid my schedule is rather full today."

Harry had a good mind to just run off then and there, but instead said nothing and allowed Remus to put his hand on his shoulder.

Harry gave a weak smile to Hermione before he disappeared.

In the time that Harry was waiting for the gift from Hermione, Vernon's beating got worse, Harry guessed that if it kept going the way that it was, he would have a broken bone to worry about in the near future.

Harry poured his spare time into reading the book that he was given. The reading was interesting, although many of the spells were beginning to become quite savage. They had gone from spells that created small wounds to things like conjuring a hundred thousand needles to hurtle at an enemy, to changing blood into mercury.

At one point, Harry had grabbed a stick from out in the garden while doing his outside chores and found himself practicing a few wand movements with his stick.

Hermione's present arrived two days late. It was a rather small package in a cylinder. Harry opened the gift wrapping to find a bit of rolled cloth. Inside the cloth was a set of metal rods and miscellaneous other devices. 'What is this...?'

He opened Hermione's attached letter, which was extremely long.

Harry,

I'm sorry it took so long for me to get this too you, but once I had procured it, I had to teach myself how to use it so that I could give you instructions.

Lock picking kits aren't exactly legal to have if you aren't a locksmith, but I really feel that we need to get you out of there.

It will take you a bit of time to get used to using this, but this kit should open any non-magically locked door, I'll explain how to do this...

At two in the morning, Harry made his first attempt at picking locks. He got as far as getting two of the pins to stick.

Harry sported a black eye for being tired in the morning, but that only made him more determined to succeed.

Along with the lock picking kit, Hermione had also provided Harry with a small vial of Tom Thumb's magical shrinking powder for squibs which Harry would use for taking his trunk once he got out of the house.

Three days later, Harry had mastered his bedroom door, and taken the time to fully understand how he would apply his knowledge to the front door. It was hard to be nimble with his fingers as Vernon had chosen the day before, to cut V-shaped nicks out of each of Harry's fingers. It hurt every time he flexed them.

Tentatively, at 3am, Harry softly packed his trunk, carefully placing his Dark Arts book at the bottom where nobody would see it, and sprinkled the powder on top of his trunk, shrinking it until it was the size of a matchbox and set to the task of unlocking his bedroom door.

A minute later, his door squeaked open. Vernon had never oiled his door as it was a dead giveaway when the boy was up to something, and so, Harry didn't open it any further than was necessary to slip out.

He carefully locked his door again and moved down the steps, avoiding the third, fifth and twelfth steps which would have creaked.

He pulled out his picks and was glad to see that the front door was as easy to pick as his bedroom.

He stepped outside of the house and closed the door, locking it again.

"Mark my words Vernon, one day I'll make you pay for the way you've treated me." Harry replied as he left the residence.

At 3:10 am, Harry Potter ran from the Dursleys, to the spot where he had once hailed the knight bus, and at 3:30am, was no longer in Little Winging any longer.

Chapter 2 – I will not forget

Harry stepped up to the front gate of Grimmauld Place and let himself in. It was his house after all.

He approached the door and tried to turn the handle. It wouldn't budge.

'Great... how do I get in now?'

"erm... Let me in?" Nothing. "Open Sesame?" Nope. "Alohamora?" Nope.

Harry blinked and got out the lock picking kit and in half an hour, he let himself in. He was surprised that the lock gave at all, given that he had guessed it was magically locked in the first place. He shrugged it off.

The foyer looked the same. Nothing had changed. He hated this place, but it was his. This was Sirius' house; it should still be his, but for now... for now it was Harry's haven.

"I'm not going to leave this house without my own consent." Harry mumbled to himself.

He ducked down to the kitchen and raided the carefully stocked kitchen, making a beeline for the pumpkin juice. He winced as he grabbed the bottle, opening the wounds on his hands.

With a glass in his hand, he made his way up the flight of steps and to one of the spare bedrooms, one where nobody normally stayed.

He found one bedroom, at the other end of the building where nobody ever went to his knowledge. It was dark, unlit and showed a sign of aging. Unsurprising then that Harry was almost convinced it was the black master bedroom. Sirius certainly wouldn't have slept there. 'But no reason why I should have the same convictions.'

Inside the room were spider webs and evidence of doxies, the bed was in very bad repair and Harry was half expecting a bogart in one of the wardrobes.

One thing was for certain. It would be a hard slog to clean this up for himself. He shook his head and moved to find a broom and then had a thought.

“Kreacher!” He yelled. “Get your arse out here!”

There was a small pop behind him and Harry spun around. “Kret—Dobby?” Harry jumped back.

“Harry Potter sir! What is you be doing here?”

“I escaped.” Harry replied simply. “And I’ve decided to live here for a bit... I was going to ask Kreacher to clean this room for me, but it’s ok.”

“Dobby will help Harry Potter!” He said with a huge grin on his face.

“Wait- Dobby- don’t!” But it was too late, Dobby was off and cleaning.

Harry growled and stepped in to lend a hand, much against Dobby’s protests, but it gave Harry something to do.

“Dobby, where is Kreacher?”

Dobby was wrestling with a doxy. “Kreacher was taken in front of the elves union for betraying his master. He was a bad elf. Dobby won’t miss him, no.”

Harry smiled. That house elf was just evil and deserved what came to him. Harry shook his head. He shouldn’t think thoughts like that. He was free from Vernon and didn’t need to have such spiteful thoughts any more. He was free. How he savoured that word.

He would throw out that book when he unpacked his trunk. The thought cheered him immensely.

Harry asked Dobby if it would be too much to organise for new furniture for the room. While Dobby could not withdraw money from any of Harry's accounts without being bonded to him, Dobby was however, quite willing to nick off with one of the beds from another room, which suited Harry just fine.

Along with a bed came a study desk, rug and wardrobe. Dobby carefully put the ones that they removed into a nearby room while trying to avoid disturbing anything that may have been in them.

By the end of the day, Harry was feeling exhausted, but still cheerful, and was happily removing things from his trunk when he pulled out the Dark Arts book. It would be relatively easy to get rid of the book Harry mused, but what was the best way to do it?

While pondering it, Dobby re-entered his room.

"I wonder if it's ok to burn a book like this..." He mused.

"Harry Potter sir wants doobby to burn a book for him?"

Harry wondered if a Dark Arts book would be enchanted with dark spells and decided that it would be much better to keep it around until he could safely dispose of it without being caught.

"Dobby, can I trust you?" Harry asked the little elf.

"Harry Potter can trust Dobby with anything!" The elf insisted.

"I mean it Dobby, I need to make sure you won't tell anybody, not Dumbledore, not Winky, nobody..."

"Dobby feels he owes Harry Potter a life debt. I is your house elf even if I is paid to be at Hogwarts."

Harry nodded slowly and hoped that it was enough. "Then don't tell anybody about this book alright."

"Of course." The elf said with a goofy grin.

Harry truly did trust Dobby and it hurt to suggest that the elf would betray him, but until he could sort out whether he was crazy or if someone really had obliviated everybody he knew.

Harry left his room and went to hide a tree in a forest.

The Black library was vast, and Harry knew it would carry books on all topics. He searched the library for the section on Dark Arts, and as he suspected, it didn't take long to find as it was quite extensive. Harry put the book on a shelf that wasn't completely full and before leaving the room, he stopped by to see if he could find any books on occlumency.

Finding one, he took it back to his room and put it aside while he wrote a letter to Hermione.

In his letter, he thanked her for her gift and asked if they could meet up at some point in the near future. He told her that he was where he belonged and hoped that she would be able to figure it out.

With Hedwig out delivering his letter, Harry thanked Dobby, showered, ate and went to bed feeling satisfied with his day.

Harry awoke to the sound of loud voices from the floors beneath. He begrudgingly got up out of bed and moved downstairs to a very stunned group of order members.

"Hey everyone." He said in a morning stupor and went to the kitchen to grab some breakfast. He noticed that Narcissa's sandwich was there.

“H-Harry!” Tonks yelled. “What the fuck are you doing here?” She yelled at him.

“I left.” He replied as he put some toast over the stove. He flexed his hands a bit, testing to see if they were any more usable than they were the day before, instead he opened the wounds again and they started bleeding anew. Sighing, he reached for the medicine cabinet and pulled out a bandage to put around his fingers.

“Harry! You ran away from home!” She exclaimed as more people entered the kitchen.

“No,” He replied calmly. “I ran away to home. Dumbledore can talk about protection from Voldemort all he likes, but at least Voldemort would kill me outright rather than torturing me day to day!” Everyone flinched at the casual use of his name.

He glared at them all. “You’re not taking me back there. I refuse to go.” He told them as Albus Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry entered the room.

“It is for your own good Harry,”

“Headmaster...” Harry fumed. “How is THIS for my own good?” He waved the bloodied bandage under the older man’s nose.

“Their treatment of me is nothing short of criminal! I sent you letters! I know that someone here has seen them! I asked for help! And nobody helped. Some protection you guys are.”

He turned his head in disappointment, grabbed his piece of toast, which had burned during the exchange and left the kitchen. As he moved up the stairs, he heard the order members start mumbling again, but the last thing he heard was professor Dumbledore saying, “It has to be his own choice, Grimmauld Place may be his house by deed, but he has no family to call his own here.”

Upon hearing this he shook his head. ‘How dare he.’ Harry muttered to himself. ‘Kreacher would be closer family to me than the Dursleys.’

He mused how the last thing his Aunt Petunia had said to him was “Freaks don’t need food.” Two days before he left. It had been the last time he had eaten with their permission.

‘How is that family?’ he asked himself as he moved up to his room and started reading his occlumency book.

Studying from a book was probably nowhere near as effective as having your mind raped by Severus Snape. As Harry read through the book, he realised that by having his mind attacked, it would create a mental barrier that was instinctive, but impossible to control.

He read that there was a decent possibility that forced instinctual barriers had the possibility of hampering a person’s ability to efficiently analyse situations, effectively reducing their ability to learn.

He shook his head at what he was reading. There were much better ways to go about this.

Someone knocked at his door. Harry closed the book, making note of the page number and answered his door.

Professor Dumbledore stood in the doorway looking kindly at him.

Harry awoke the next day feeling very confused. He remembered nothing of the previous day after Dumbledore had knocked on his door.

The back of his mind held the answer he needed. Someone had obliviated him. It was that simple. He struggled to remember, but it just escaped him.

He found on his desk, Hedwig, with a letter attached to her leg.

Harry,

I'm glad that you're safe. My parents had asked me a few days ago to go to Paris with them, but I've asked if I could spend the time studying instead.

They've allowed me to go thankfully and I'll be coming to your place tomorrow.

I look forward to it, we have a lot to talk about.

Hermione

Harry sat back in his chair. It would be nice to be with someone who believed him. With what happened the day before, Harry was almost positive that not only had he been obliviated, but someone had tried obviating Hermione also.

He was also sure that the person handing out obliations like they were lemon drops, was none other than Albus Dumbledore himself.

Harry frowned and started to pace the room. What was he to do? Harry was very sure that the memory charm had not worked as he had planned it.

Harry knew deep down that the kind and caring Headmaster was not what he seemed. The fact that he had been obliviated to cover up the whole issue with the Ministry and Sirius, made Harry wonder if Dumbledore had infact been successful at charming him when he was younger.

'How much of my life is all a lie?' He asked himself. 'Isn't it my life to live? Why should he get to choose the things I remember?' He clenched his fists. 'I've got to stop him!'

It occurred to him that there was no way he could possibly talk Dumbledore out of modifying people's memories, all Dumbledore had to do was charm him and there was every possibility that he would succeed. At the very least, he would forget the events of the day until his brain caught up.

Harry paused with that train of thought. 'In order to stop him, I'm going to need that book... damn!'

"Dobby!" Harry called. "I need you to do me a favour can you? Let me know if anybody comes to the house."

Dobby eagerly nodded and asked if Harry wanted anything to eat. Harry smiled at him and insisted that the little house elf didn't need to go that far.

Wandless Magic is a very difficult skill to master, requiring a lot of magical potential to do consciously.

One of the biggest advantages of wandless magic is that spells which operate directly on wands is of course nulled by the absence of a wand, such as prior incantato.

New wands in particular, until they are worn in have an easily recognisable signature which is easily tracked.

The easiest of spells to do with a wand are very difficult to the wandless beginner. Somewhat similar in relation breathing around your home is to breathing around the mount of a volcano.

Magic itself can be likened to water in a faucet. A wizard or witch's wand is the handle that you turn to get water out of the faucet.

If you remove the handle from the faucet, you are left with a peg with a square end which is difficult to turn with one's hands.

The concept then of wandless magic is to re-forge that peg to have it's own handle without having a removable one. This is achieved using spells of increasing difficulty at regular intervals until turning the faucet is as easy as it was using a wand.

This process however is very difficult to do by the standard wizard.

‘That means that the ministry is tracking my wand... If I could actually do this wandless magic thing, it would mean that I could practice things without anybody knowing...’ Harry mused to himself.

He stretched out his hand before him. “Lumos!” Nothing happened.

“Lumos!”

Harry became rather frustrated after half an hour of trying. He supposed that what he was doing was trying to cast a spell by sheer brute force.

Harry pictured the tap in his mind. He pictured himself turning the tap. In his mind, the tap resisted, which surprised Harry. It should be easy for him to turn an imaginary tap.

As he tried in his mind to turn the tap, he held out his hand. “Lumos!” The tap budged and a slow drip started. His hand developed a light glow.

“No way!” He exclaimed. He lost his concentration in the euphoria and the light disappeared, but this didn’t matter. Harry knew he could do this. Just wait till he showed Hermione tomorrow.

Harry tried doing his magic and managed to get his hand glowing to the point of it being that of a glow-worm before Dobby announced that Nymphadora Tonks was downstairs.

Harry snapped his book shut and put it away before Tonks had the chance to come looking for him. He reached for an occlumency book and sat down with it and started to read.

Tonks knocked on the door a few minutes later. “Harry? Dumbledore said that he’d talked you into going back to your relatives... Are you ready to go?”

Harry blinked at her. So, Dumbledore wanted him to go back to his relatives did he? Harry wouldn’t do that. But he couldn’t flat out refuse without giving away the fact that the memory charm had failed again.

“To be honest Tonks, I wasn’t thinking when I said it... I don’t mean to go back on my words, but I promised Hermione that she could stay with me while her parents were away.”

“But Harry! They’re worried sick about you!”

Harry just about gagged. He certainly choked down his surprised. They missed him...? More like they missed abusing him.

“I’m not ready to go back there Tonks, not until my wounds have healed.”

“I’m sorry you have to go through all that, but your Uncle Vernon has promised that he’ll catch the kids who did it to you.”

Harry tried not to yell, he tried not to scream at her. It wasn’t her fault...

“When I see Professor Dumbledore next, I’ll tell him that I’ll go back once Hermione’s parents are back.”

Tonks nodded. “Alright then Harry, if you’ve made plans like that then we’ll just have to work around it. I’ll let your aunt and uncle know that you’re ok though, alright?”

Harry nodded and watched as she turned and apparated away.

Harry ground his teeth.

“LUMOS!” He yelled, and his whole body glowed brightly for a moment until he calmed down.

“Damn you Dumbledore. I’m going to show you how unpredictable someone who has forgotten their past can be.”

Hermione arrived by taxi the following day.

Harry heard the door shut on the car outside and immediately intercepted her before she opened the door.

“Hey! You’re here.” He grinned. “You still remember the Ministry and that don’t you?”

“I’m still sane Harry,” She replied wryly. “How have you been, have you been holding up ok?”

He nodded in response. “I’ve been passing the time studying.” He gestured inside and suggested that she take the room next to his. People seemed less likely to go down that part of the house.

It seemed that Dobby had the same idea too and had surprised Harry by having the room next door already cleaned before Harry had even opened the door.

“So you’ve been studying huh?” Hermione grinned as she unshrunk her trunk. “Are you sure that you’re sane?”

“I’ve never been more sane Hermione.” He replied seriously. He was fully aware that she was trying to show she was happy to be here, but Harry was in no mood for jokes.

“Studying what then?” She asked as she opened the trunk and took a few of her clothes out of the trunk.

Harry grinned. “Just working on some occlumency and stuff like that. Accio teddy bear!” The bear zipped into his hands.

Hermione stared at him. “Harry! You’re not of age!” Then she gaped. “Harry! Where is your wand?”

“It’s in my bedroom.” He grinned as he put the bear on her sheets.

“So then... you did wandless magic...? Consciously?” She shook her head. “That’s quite an achievement Harry.”

“It’s not easy, but I can show you how I learned it.”

After they had emptied Harry’s best friend’s trunk Harry set about explaining the tap and faucet theory that he had read.

Hermione had a lot less luck than Harry did, not even managing to imagine a tap that had resistance to turning.

“Perhaps you’re imagining the wrong kind of tap.” Harry replied nonchalantly.

Hermione sighed. “Perhaps I’m just not able to do wandless magic.” She replied with a faint whiff of despair.

“I’m sure you’ll manage, I think you just need your epiphany to get it.”

After lunch, Hermione wanted to work on her holiday assignment, Harry however wanted to work further on his occlumency, and so they went their separate ways for the afternoon.

Despite the fact that Harry had said he’d work on occlumency, he spent most of his time trying to improve on his wandless magic and got as far as making diffindo slice the legs off a chair and was very close to having reparo work.

“Harry, you’re not studying...” Hermione said sternly as she entered the library.

He grinned sheepishly. “I’ve kind of been so excited I can’t bring myself to do any more reading for a bit.” He turned back to the chair. “Reparo!” the rest of the cut sealed itself and the chair was whole again. “Phew, got it.”

Harry sat down on the chair to prove to himself that he had gotten it right and Dobby popped up as if on queue to deliver sandwiches and pumpkin juice to the teenagers.

“I will admit that I’m impressed, but what I’m curious to know is what got you studying wandless magic in the first place?”

“To defend myself. If I can do magic under the ministry’s nose, then if Dumbledore forces me to go back to the Dursleys, I can make sure that if Vernon tries anything cruel to me again, he’d regret it.”

“Dumblydore cannot force Mister Harry Potter sir from his own house. There is ancient magic in the house of Black.” Dobby told him as if that explained everything.

Harry raised an eyebrow. ‘Well that’s something that works in my favour for once...’ He reached for a sandwich and winced once more as his hand wounds opened once more. “Good, because I’m not going back there.”

Hermione frowned as she saw blood pool into his bandages. ‘Why would Dumbledore want to send him back there so badly?’ She wondered to herself.

“Dumbledore tried to obliviate me again a couple of days ago.” Harry said suddenly without looking up from his sandwich.

Hermione looked at him as if she’d just tasted slugs in her sandwich. “No way Harry! Professor Dumbledore wouldn’t do that!”

“Well, I’m not a hundred percent sure, but he’s the last thing I remember seeing. I’m sure that he tried to remove the truth about Sirius from my head again, but all that happened was that I have a large blank in my mind from when I met him in my bedroom doorway till the time when I got up the next morning.”

“It usually takes time for the brain to assimilate the memories given in an obliviation, but if what you’re saying is true, then it would seem that your brain is discarding whatever it is they are trying to put in there.”

“Don’t forget that you’ve survived an obliviation too.”

“Yes, and I have a large gap in my memory as well. I will admit that Dumbledore is the last person I remember seeing, but that’s hardly proof that he did it.” She told him.

Harry nodded.

“Dobby has seen professor Dumblydore put Mister Harry Potter to sleep two sleeps back. He told Dobby that Master Harry was sick from worrying about Sirius and needed to rest. Then Dobby went to get Master Harry a wet towel for his forehead.”

Harry scowled. An eyewitness. It was Dumbledore.

“He needs to be stopped.” He growled.

“Harry, we don’t even know precisely what he’s doing!” Hermione replied, exasperated. “We can’t confront him without knowing what he’s doing!”

“Hermione! He’s made Sirius death to be an accident! He was murdered Hermione!”

“To what end Harry?” She replied. “I know that what he’s doing is wrong! What we need to know is why!”

Harry glared at her and punched the table. He badly wanted to scream at her and tell her she was wrong, but he knew that it was a useless argument. She was level headed.

“Just give it some time, we’ll find out what he’s up to. But first, I want to find out why it is that you and I aren’t affected by the memory charms.” She said as she rose from her seat and started browsing the library. “In the meantime, you should probably fake and make everyone think that you’re ok. Well, ok by their standards.”

Harry huffed and pictured his tap. “Accio Occlumency book!” He snapped, leaving a large hole in every wall between Harry’s bedroom and the library.

Harry had calmed down considerably by the time that Ron suddenly popped into the house via the fireplace. Harry had blinked in surprise when he saw that Ron had his trunk.

“Ron? What’s up? What are you doing here?”

“Ron!” Hermione squeaked.

“You wrote and asked me to come.” Ron replied. “Don’t you remember?”

Harry was about to snap at him when he saw Hermione glare at him from the side. “Sorry man, I’m just having a hard time over the last couple of days.” He gestured out of the kitchen and up to the room He and Ron usually stayed in.

“To be honest, I can’t even remember what I wrote I was so out of it.”

“Yeah, you seemed kinda ditzzy in your letter. I suppose losing Sirius like that is a real blow huh? Poor guy, didn’t deserve to go like that.”

‘Even if you don’t realise how he went, you got that right.’ Harry thought as he sighed.

“You get the room for yourself; I’ve taken another room for a bit. Why don’t you unpack your stuff and meet us down in the kitchen for some lunch.”

Harry left Ron to it and went down ahead of him to the kitchen.

“What’s he doing here?” Hermione asked.

“He’ll be down in a minute. I think Dumbledore has tried to get him to spy on us, whether he knows it or not.” Harry sighed. “I’m going to

try to just leave things as they are for now, he doesn't deserve the anger I feel."

After a few minutes of silence, Ron came down his room and helped himself to some cake.

"That disgusting sandwich is still in the fridge?" He asked whoever was listening.

"We're saving it for when we see Aunt Malfoy next." Harry replied.

"Aunt Malfoy?" Ron just about choked on his cake.

"It was a joke Ron."

After lunch, Ron pulled out his chess set and challenged Harry to a game.

Harry lost. After the third game, he was seriously thinking about wandlessly moving around a few of Ron's pieces while he wasn't looking.

All in all, things were relatively peaceful at Grimmauld Place. It was hard for Harry to see Dumbledore strutting serenely around the house like he owned it whenever he was present.

Harry tried his hardest to make it seem like he was 'recovering' from his ordeal over Sirius, but for every day that he had to fake it, the harder he studied at 2am from the Dark Arts book.

Harry's birthday passed with mild interest. Ron and Hermione had given him a cake in his honour, but all in all it was a rather abysmal birthday.

It was a far happier day on the first of August when their OWL results came in together with 6th year prefect badges for both Hermione and

Ron. They threw another friendly party for Hermione getting straight Os through her marks.

Harry had not done nearly as well, but had passed Potions, much to his surprise. Ron had failed which left him feeling rather bad, but the amount of food that Dobby cooked up for them left all three in high spirits by the end of the night.

Three weeks after Ron had moved in, Hermione came into the Drawing room one day a few minutes after Ron had gone to bed. Harry was meditating, in an attempt to move to the next stage of his personal occlumency lessons.

Harry raised his eyes to meet her. "Everything ok?"

"Better than ok!" She replied with her biggest smirk. "Lumos!" Her hand glowed gently.

Harry's eyes lit up. She could do it! "Hermione! You did it!"

She laughed. "After all that Harry, you were right. I was imagining the taps like we have in my parent's house, but my tap is a very old 1930's style tap, I had to find it in a book, but I got it as soon as I found it!"

Harry blinked. He was right?

Harry was happy for her. He knew that Hermione hated it when she couldn't do something.

From that day forward, Harry coached Hermione with her wandless magic in secret whenever nobody else was around. Life was pleasant, with the exception of Ron bringing up Sirius at the most inopportune times which did nothing for the anger that was building in Harry, threatening to explode at any moment.

One week, three days before the train left for Hogwarts, Harry's life took a turn for the worse.

The day had gone beautifully, Harry was confident by this point that he was developing a decently strong mental barrier, though he wouldn't know for sure until someone tried probing him.

Harry was about to walk past the drawing room on the way to the kitchen when he heard the distinct voice of Dumbledore.

“It bothers me Miss Granger that you appear to have been unaffected, your resistance is curious indeed. Doubly curious is the fact that Mister Potter also resisted, but he is fine now. I must have been tired when I did you both.”

“Why are you doing this Professor?” Hermione asked. “I trusted you, the whole world trusted you!”

“Oh, don't you worry miss Granger, in a second you will trust me again, just as the whole world has. There is no need to explain my motives to someone as you. Obliviate!”

“Ah-!” Hermione's scream was cut short before it could grow in volume.

“You're such a bright student Miss Granger. I'm so proud of you. I'm glad that we could have this chat. I have it on good authority that Mister Weasley wishes to ask you a question tomorrow, be a good girl and give him a chance. He has such a fragile heart and is easily angered.

“You look tired, I think you could do with an early night.”

Harry hitched his breath and with a quiet pop, he knew that Dumbledore had apparated Hermione upstairs.

He let out a breath and though shaking, went to the kitchen trying to look inconspicuous. He would need to wait until Dumbledore was gone before he could check on Hermione.

Harry took a glass of Pumpkin Juice up to his room, where Dumbledore was just closing Hermione's door.

“Ah Harry. Miss Granger seemed very tired tonight... I hope that she is ok. And on that note, how are you faring my boy?”

“I’m fine sir.” He forced himself to answer. Harry was becoming very good at hiding his anger behind his occlumency shield.

“Are your holidays essays finished?”

“Just about sir, I just need to proof read them.”

“Excellent!” He beamed.

Harry felt something brush against his shields.

“And I see you have been learning occlumency very effectively! Well done my boy. Who was teaching you?”

“Myself sir.” He replied honestly. “The Black Library had a few really good books on the subject.”

“I have not had a chance to read through any of the books there. I hope I shall get to some day soon.” He twinkled.

“Miss Granger’s parents will be back from their trip tomorrow won’t they?”

“Yes sir.”

“I suspect you’ll be ready to return to your family by then?”

“We’ll see sir,” Harry replied. “I’d like to finish off my assignment before heading back.” Harry replied using the first excuse he could think of.

“Very well my boy, that’s reasonable.”

Dumbledore disappeared from Harry’s vision with a pop.

“Dobby?” Harry whispered.

“Harry Potter sir?” The house elf appeared at command.

“Is anybody else apart from Ron in the house?”

“No sir, everybody has left for the night.”

“Make sure that Ron doesn’t leave his room Dobby.” Harry said darkly as he pushed open Hermione’s door.

Hermione was sitting on the bed, her eyes wide open and flickering around the place uncontrollably.

“Hermione!” He called. “Hermione! Snap out of it!” He shook her gently.

He held her hand for a long moment while painfully watching her. Would she remember their shared past when she caught up?

Harry raised his hand and pictured his tap. Perhaps if he could see what was going through her mind he would be able to help her some how.

“Ligilimens!” He could not turn the tap. That spell was still out of his reach. It was to be expected. He had only practiced the movement, but had never used the spell himself. He shook his head and left the room, closing the door behind him.

He immediately went down to the library and got out his book once more. Tonight, for the first time, he used one of the spells. His favourite target, the chair, was reduced to ashes. If it had been a real person, the spell would have burned their blood dry.

He kicked the ashes and scattered them about the room and he screamed, and then he cried.

Harry awoke with a start. His head was resting on the book he had pulled out to study for his assignment. He saw Hermione standing over him, her hands still on the blanket she was putting over him.

“Oh, Harry.” She said smiling weakly. “I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“Hermione...” Harry blinked. “Are you alright?”

“I... I don’t know...” She replied. “... I don’t remember anything from last night.”

“Do you remember the ministry?” Harry asked, using their common point of reference.

“Ye-Yes. Was I memory charmed?”

Harry broke down crying. “Oh Hermione! I was so scared! I heard him say it! I heard him say it and I didn’t do anything!”

“It’s ok Harry, there was nothing that you could have done. You didn’t break your cover did you?”

“N-No.” He sniffed. “I waited until he was gone to check on you, but there was nothing I could do. You just laid there! Your eyes were so wide open, and your pupils darted around your face as if... as if... I don’t know!”

“Harry, its ok... I’m fine... I remember everything.”

“Don’t leave me Hermione!” He pleaded. “Your parents are back from their holiday today! Please don’t go!”

She shook her head. “It hurts to stay with them Harry. I love them more than anything, but when they look at me as if I were a sick child, I just can’t take that.”

Harry’s heart swelled. He wouldn’t be alone after all. He hoped that she had a good excuse to use.

“They’ll be here in an hour. I’m going to wait outside for them and read a book.”

“I’ll wait with you!” Harry exclaimed.

“No Harry, don’t leave this house until we leave for the train. If you leave this house, the order could forcibly take you to your aunt and uncle.”

Harry wiped his eyes and his face hardened. He couldn’t allow that. Hermione got up and left to wait outside.

It was an hour and a half later that she came back inside the house looking very relieved. She explained that she told them that she would love to spend the time with them back home, but she couldn’t pass up the opportunity to study from the library here.

Her parents had understood and allowed it, thus ensuring that Harry had a good reason to stay in this house for the rest of the holidays. He let loose a breath of relief.

Harry had been finishing off his final essay when Hermione came into his bedroom crying.

She stuttered badly and told him that Ron had asked her out. Hermione couldn’t bring herself to say ‘yes’ to him. So she told him that she had to figure out her feelings first.

Ron had accused her of being in love with Harry and then started yelling at her for every thing he found wrong with her.

“He said he loved me.” Hermione sobbed. “But does he really? Is that really what Ron feels? Or is it just what that bastard old man wants him to feel?”

Harry held her until she felt better and apologised for being so emotional.

As Harry watched her leave his room. He realised that he was close to snapping. He had to calm down or he'd do something he'd regret. They were still no closer to finding out what Dumbledore's game was.

He began his meditations once again.

The week went by slowly, and Harry was starting to think that he'd never be able to pick up a wand again. Would he remember how to use it? His tap had its own handle now, was it even possible to use a wand to open it?

He had almost finished his Dark Magic book and had spent the past couple of nights perusing the Black Library for a couple of new Dark Arts books.

In the cold of night, on the 31st of August, Harry grabbed three books and placed them into the bottom of his trunk before wandlessly packing his trunk.

Author's Note:

I'm not a fan of Author's Notes. I feel like I rushed the last bit a little, but I wanted to make sure that I had this chapter done at a reasonable hour. I'm probably not going to make a habit of replying in-story to people who post reviews, that's specifically what I put the forums linked below up for. It's anonymous posting, so I'll answer everything there.

Having said that, Thanks go to LegalAlien and Jayu for the very first reviews I've ever received from people I don't know in real life. I hope I've lived up to your expectations.

--Steven

Chapter 3 – Unforgivable

Hermione Granger was not in a good mood as she walked towards Kings Cross railway station. A mere 50 metres and she would be free of Ronald's complaining as he had since the day she had turned him down.

Harry Potter however, was even more irritable. With Arthur Weasley on one side of him, Mad Eye Moody with his stupid bowler's hat on the other side of him, Tonks in front and Ron and Hermione arguing behind him, he was just itching to scream at one of them. Tonks teetered very close to that precipice when she had mentioned the Dursley's love for him an hour prior.

"Ah, the station!" He chirped happily, breaking through his order guards. "We're finally there."

He ran towards the wall and entered before anybody could stop him.

The platform was bustling with first-year parents straightening their children's clothes and wishing happy times to their children and other parents giving stern discussions about applying wholeheartedly to studies or the occasional Quidditch cheer.

Harry spotted Luna Lovegood entering the train while whistling "Weasley is our King" and he shook his head in fondness. Even with things the way they were, there were constants.

As Hermione and Ron came through the barrier, he ushered them towards the train as fast as possible, however, Hermione had found her parents wishing to say goodbye and of course, Arthur wasn't going to let his youngest son go without the father-son pep talk.

Harry sighed and stepped onto the train to find an empty compartment.

He thought to do some meditation while he waited for them, but he didn't think it was a good idea to enter a state of serenity with Draco possibly lurking around. He did however do some breathing exercises which calmed him down dramatically.

After he had gotten full control of himself he pulled out his wand.

“Lumos” Nothing happened. ‘Oh shit!’ Harry thought to himself. “Lumos!”

“Everything alright Harry?” Neville asked as he ducked his head in the compartment.

Harry went pale. “Sure, everything is fine, just messing around.”

It occurred to Harry for a moment that he was still imagining his tap in his mind as he called the spell. He blanked his mind as best he could and tried one more time. “Lumos.” His wand lit up and he felt relieved. He extinguished it.

Neville clapped and Harry gave him a lopsided grin. “Not being allowed to do magic for the summer, I was wondering if I’d remember how to actually use a wand.”

Neville laughed. “As if you could forget!”

Harry just shrugged. He felt as if he almost had. His attempt at getting magic to work again proved to him he was going to need to improve if he were to switch from wandless to wand magic in an instant.

He was brought out of his thoughts by Ron and Hermione entering the room.

“You’ve been so muddled in the brain the last couple of months that I’m surprised you can even tie your own shoelaces!” Ron yelled at her.

Harry knew he was in for a long train ride that wasn’t going to be the most enjoyable, especially when Draco and the two stooges decided to give his yearly visit to their compartment. “Oh, it looks like the institution actually let you out did they Potter?”

Harry raised his wand, ready to cast whatever came to his mind.

“Draco Malfoy!” Rolanda Hooch said as she tapped on his shoulder. “There will be no fighting on this train, understood?”

She turned to see who he was pointing his wand at. “Harry Potter, the medical bay sees enough of you, so drop it. Both of you.”

Draco glared at her and left with his cronies.

Harry sat back in his bed, thinking. The sorting ceremony had been nothing special, but Harry did catch the Headmaster smiling at him once. It was the way that he smiled that was stuck in Harry’s mind. It was a simple smile, but Harry knew that behind that smile seemed a smugness that the Headmaster thought he had Harry under his control. ‘If he truly had me under his thumb, then he would have had me back at the Dursleys. One point for me.’

Unable to sleep, Harry got up from his bed and grabbed his Defence Against the Dark Arts textbook and his cloak.

Wrapping his cloak around him, Harry moved down into the common room where he found Hermione sitting in a state of complete relaxation. It surprised him to find her meditating in a similar style to the one he used.

Harry wasn’t game to sit down on the chairs as his weight would leave a telltale mark that someone was sitting there. Instead, he chose to sit in a rear corner and started reading his textbook.

It was Harry’s intention to get ahead in his studies, specifically in the practical section. In his first free time, he was going to go to the room of requirement and study from his Dark Arts book. He felt so terribly behind if he was going to stop Dumbledore from controlling people the way he was.

He had lost track of time, but became aware when he saw movement in the room. Hermione had risen from her meditation and was walking back to her dormitory when she stopped and looked right in the direction that Harry was sitting.

“Accio Cloak!”

Harry suddenly felt very exposed. “How did you know I was there?” He asked.

“You-er-um... your foot was poking out from under it.”

Harry cursed himself for being so careless. “That’s the Dark Arts textbook is it?” She asked him. “Why didn’t you sit over by me?”

“I didn’t want to disturb you. You looked so serene sitting like that.”

“I wouldn’t have minded. I was just working on my occlumency shields.”

“You’re practising too?” Harry was kind of surprised.

“Dumbledore has been trying to probe me on a regular basis.” She informed him. “He tried it while we were at the sorting ceremony.”

Harry grumbled. “I wish he’d mind his own business.”

Hermione shook her head. “It doesn’t matter. He didn’t get in.” She looked at him square in the eyes. “What I want to know however is why you needed your invisibility cloak.”

Harry shrugged. “I didn’t want to be seen down here. If you weren’t here I was going to practice my other magic.”

“I would like to as well. We should set aside a night to practice together.” She suggested.

Harry shook his head. “I don’t want anybody else knowing that I can do it yet. Least of all our beloved Headmaster.”

“Neither do I Harry, so we’ll sneak out and go to the room of requirement.”

The suggestion shocked Harry. Hermione, breaking the curfew of her own free will. Then it occurred to her that when it came to the curfew, she might have been one of the major offenders. He wouldn't put it past her to sneak out and to the library to do some late night research.

He grinned at her. "Alright then."

Classes went quite smoothly with little issues except where they normally existed. Harry was constantly belittled by Snape in potions, and the times when Harry had his potion absolutely perfect, it was sabotaged by Snape at the last minute.

Homework was inevitable, and with inevitable homework, came Hermione's nagging to have it done as soon as possible.

Harry didn't need to be nagged. He needed his spare time more than ever before. Tuesday and Thursday nights, Harry and Hermione studied together in the Room of Requirements, having both advanced to a level proficient enough now to engage in small duels.

They were very careful not to hurt each other as a midnight trip to the Hospital Wing was the last thing that either of them needed. The remaining nights, Harry was in the Room practising his Dark Arts. He had finished going through the practical parts that he could do and instead, the last two chapters were about dark rituals, which while Harry found rather interesting, but was hardly going to use himself. Things like the bloodlust ritual and the soul lock ritual were group spells, neither of which Harry would even suggest to Hermione or Ron.

Harry couldn't even bring himself to mention any of his books to Hermione. He felt ashamed that he was even considering using any of the spells. But he knew that a 6th year level knowledge of Defence was going to be absolutely useless in bringing Dumbledore to atone for his crimes, so he did not stop.

Harry flipped the last page of his gift book. He was about to close the cover when he noticed that a piece of paper was slipped under the

metal reinforcement corner. He pulled the piece of paper out and turned it over to find a message.

I hope that by the time you finish this book, you will have replaced your pathetic righteous anger with something more fun to play with.

“...Bellatrix...” Harry scowled. There was proof that the Ministry happened. Harry felt reassured again that what he knew of the last three months was the actual events that occurred. Harry was not grateful to the source of the reassurance.

“I’m going to kill her.” He said emotionlessly. “She killed Sirius, and I won’t forgive her for that.”

Harry rose and put on his cloak of invisibility and exited the Room of Requirement. In the distance, he heard squabbling, a tell tale sign that Hermione and Ron were on their late-night prefect rounds.

He stood perfectly still and made sure that not a part of him would be visible as they walked past him.

He waited until they were well out of sight before heading off to his room.

The following day at breakfast, Professor McGonagall pulled both Harry and Hermione aside and told them that the headmaster wanted to see them. They shared a look and hoped that what they were wanted for was purely academic. They hadn’t done anything to give the impression that they had done anything out of place or wrong with what everyone else was doing.

Still, their hearts beated as they opened the door to the Headmaster’s office.

“Albus, I’ve brought them.” McGonagall urged them in and then closed the door behind her.

They each looked at Dumbledore expectantly. "You wished to see us sir?" Hermione asked him.

"Yes, I wanted to speak to you both about your essays that you both wrote over the holidays. They really are of the most exceptional quality. I'm assuming that it is mostly attributed to the resources available at the Black Library.

"I'd like your permission to have them bound and placed in the Hogwarts Library if that is ok with you both."

They each let out a breath they didn't know they were holding.

"That would be really wonderful professor!" Hermione exclaimed.

"Excellent! This leaves only one question for you both. Why weren't your essays the ones I had your teachers assign you with your new memories." He flicked his wand and the door behind them locked.

'Oh shit!' Harry thought as he felt a staggering blow against his mental shields.

"Even with your memories in tact, I can understand you working hard on your occlumency skills Mister Potter, and I commend you on it, but Miss Granger, I cannot imagine for the life of me what reason you would have to have such a strong shield if not to keep me out."

Hermione drew herself up. "My thoughts are my own Headmaster; I wish to keep them private."

"Your thoughts are not private!" The headmaster bellowed. "Such a thought is both a muggle ideal and an assumption on behalf of the wizarding world!"

"The fact that you Harry allowed Voldemort to return to his body is troublesome at the very least. It is hard to control a panicked population. They tend to run and hide like rats from a cat! This whole issue with Sirius and the Ministry must be kept unknown from the population to stop them from panicking."

“So you can control them?” Harry asked venomously.

“People are sheep Harry, they do not think for themselves. There is enough animosity in the pureblooded part of the wizarding world to overflow into the muggle population and cause a complete imbalance of power.”

“That’s not for you to decide! We have aurors to keep the peace!”

“Aurors? Hah! Those fools can’t catch Tom Riddle, they can’t even keep Lucius Malfoy from escaping their ropes! What makes you think they’re capable of anything?”

“We’ll go public with what we know.” Hermione told him decisively.

The headmaster calmed and offered them each a lemon drop.

Harry suddenly had the suspicion they might have been poisoned.

“It’s clear to me now that a third attempt to obliviate either of you will probably end in failure. So instead, we’re going to play a different game. I will fix up this mistake with your essays, leave your minds in tact and you two are both going to back down and give up this hopeless romance you continue to pursue.”

“Roma—” Harry was about to ask.

“How did you find out about that?” Hermione glared at him sparing a brief glance with Harry.

“What? Do you think I have not been aware of you and Mister Potter sneaking off to the Room of Requirement every few nights? No, I’ve been a headmaster of this school long enough to know what two students alone do in that room. It was quite easy to figure out once you see the signs.”

Harry could have laughed, but he kept his response to that thought carefully hidden. He did his best to look ashamed.

“ This romance will stop. Immediately, and the Room of Requirements has been made off limits.”

“I refuse.” Hermione told him defiantly, surprising Harry. If he didn’t know better, he would have thought she really did think it was a romance.

“You do not get a choice in the matter Miss Granger. If either of you do not back down under the conditions I’ve given, you will both loose something important to you.”

“I have nothing important to lose!”

“Oh I assure you Mister Potter. You do.”

Hermione looked like she wanted to hit him, but restrained herself very well. She pointed her wand at the door behind her. “Alohamora!” and let herself out, with Harry in tow.

“I cannot believe he would say such things!”

“Nice going with the whole Romance thing, even I was almost convinced, as if it would ever happen.”

“Oh Harry-!” Hermione stared at him, with tears forming in her eyes. “You! I!” She spluttered, then turned and left him standing very confused.

‘What did I say?’

Hermione avoided Harry like the plague for a few days after that event. Harry became aware that without Hermione to talk to, he felt rather alienated from everyone else. It was a very lonely feeling.

He was out of touch with Hermione, and he had been unable to find a room to use to practise his skills where he knew there was no chance

someone would walk in on him. There was one place, but he was very averse to going there. There were too many bad memories in that place.

The only practice that he managed to achieve was doing his meditations where he explored his magic from the inside. He was surprised, the third day after Dumbledore's ultimatum that he became aware of faint outlines around everyone around him.

Pulsing colours that emanated from each and every person. At first he found it very annoying as he couldn't seem to get rid of it. Especially those whose colours bled a lot further out than others, making it hard for him to see around them. There were two people of notable interest who seemed to have auras much greater than the other students.

Draco's aura was a very murky brown-grey that extended twice that of the average student around him, though it was rather see-through. It also had a curious disturbance around his left arm which made Harry almost positive that Draco had taken the mark of Voldemort.

The second student was Hermione, whose aura was twice that of Draco's and a lot more solid. He wasn't sure what to make of it and resigned that he would speak to her if he ever got the chance to again.

Harry's greatest annoyance however was a small aura that Harry saw quite commonly. The biggest difference between this aura and any other was that it emanated from nothing. It was the height and build of Professor Dumbledore and suddenly, Harry knew how Dumbledore had known about them being in the room of requirements.

He grinned at knowing that he would be fully aware of Dumbledore spying in the future.

He noticed that Dumbledore did not devote as much attention on either Harry or Hermione as he thought the old man would and visited classes for only five to ten minutes at a time.

By the fifth day, he couldn't take it any more. His anger was building and he needed to take it out somewhere, what was worse was the fact that Hermione was also showing signs of great irritation, and so Harry had deliberately walked past her while her back was turned. He placed a hand on her shoulder to keep her from running and said softly into her ear, "Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, please meet me tonight," and left before she could respond.

It was cold and dark in the bathroom and no sign of Myrtle either, which surprised Harry as he expected her to be flirting with him as soon as he walked in. Instead, Hermione was already waiting for him when he arrived.

"I'm glad you came." Harry told her. "I've been so lonely lately."

"Me too..." She replied. "What did you want to talk about?"

"Actually, I wanted to show you somewhere." He replied to her. "I think we both need to let off some steam as I noticed you've been a lot more snappy at the other students lately."

"I haven't been snappy!" She retorted hotly.

Harry folded his arms and gave her a look that told her that she'd just proven his point.

"Alright, I'm irritated."

"Fine then, come with me and we'll do some cleaning."

Harry moved to the sinks and called out in parselmouth, revealing the entrance to the chamber of secrets.

"Harry... Is this what I think it is?"

He nodded and jumped down the hole, trying not to make a noise.

The smell in the chamber of secrets was nothing short of rancid.

When Hermione finally appeared at the bottom of the entrance, she was very quick to put a bubblehead charm over. Harry wondered why he hadn't thought of it himself.

"Oh Merlin that smells gross!" She cried.

"Well, there's a 3 year old dead basilisk in here." Harry explained. "We're going to need to get rid of it in order to make good use of this place." Harry cast nox to put out his wand as they entered the lit chamber and put his wand away.

Tonight, they would practise scourgify to great length.

When they finally got too tired to work any further, they called it a night and trekked back to the entrance. Harry was about to start climbing when Hermione tugged on his shirt to stop him.

"Harry, I don't want to be alone in this world. There's nobody I can trust here except you... I don't want us to ever separate."

"They why wouldn't you let me talk to you?"

"When you said that Dumbledore was wrong, and that there was no way that you and I could have a relationship together... My throat went tight, and I felt like you'd torn my heart in half."

Harry was trying to bring himself to understand exactly what it was he thought she was implying. "Hermione... What are you trying to say?"

"I- I think I'm falling in love with you Harry." She said, and then looked away. "I was so mad at Dumbledore for telling me that I could have the one thing my heart wanted most. I thought that if I distanced myself from you, I could lesson the feeling," She let loose tears that rolled down her face. "But it didn't work!" She wailed and flung herself on Harry.

Harry held her as best he could. There. It was out in the open, she loved him.

How could he respond? It was true that he consciously felt it when she was not talking to her, and it made him anxious, but could he say that he loved her back?

And while his mind pondered those questions, he barely registered that he was lifting her face, and gently putting his lips on top of hers.

They stood in their embrace as they kissed for as long as they could before Harry gently lifted his face from hers, where her eyes glittered with tears anew.

“Harry...” She said in wonder.

And suddenly it hit him. He too had fallen in love with the brunette bookworm and best friend from first year. What was worse was the fact that he hadn’t even realised it until halfway through the kiss. They had grown closer in the time that they shared, being anchors for reality for each other.

“It’s ok Hermione... We’ll work through this together, you and I.” He told her as he held her shoulders. “We’ll do it together.”

She smiled and hugged him again.

After they got to the top of the well, Hermione disillusioned herself, where Harry saw that she too had an aura around her visible when she was not. He warned her to be careful going back and pulled his cloak around himself.

Time passed slowly, but Harry was happy, though he tried his hardest not to show it. He slept well and applied himself with renewed vigour to his school work, just making the deadlines for a couple of assignments he was late with.

He spent all of his spare time down in the chamber cleaning it and returned to practising the spells from his old Dark Arts book while

starting to work slowly from the second one he'd brought from the Black mansion.

At one point, Hermione approached Harry in the library, casting a Muffliato as she approached.

“I've found something which should interest you Harry.”

She placed a tome down in front of him and read from it. “Memory Charms require a license to use. In modern times, licenses are only given to Ministry Aurors or magical folk working in the oblivator squadron. Which means that either Dumbledore has at some point worked in one of those departments, or is doing it illegally.

“When I cross referenced Dumbledore's history, it was not listed that he worked in either of those departments and has always done his work alone or with his brother Aberforth.”

Harry grinned. “So that means that if we can get the aurors to keep an eye on Dumbledore for a while, they can catch him in the act!”

“ That's what I'm thinking, but I'm very concerned because everybody sees Dumbledore as a pillar of the community.”

“We'll send an anonymous message to an auror that we know isn't involved in the order.”

“Amelia Bones?” Hermione asked.

“She seemed like a reasonable person.” Harry agreed. “We'll start with her and see what comes of it.”

With the letter sent off, Harry and Hermione waited impatiently for any suggestion of action, the answer was a week coming, and if they'd known what the response would be, they would never have pursued the line of thought in the first place.

It was with great trepidation and fear that they both found themselves before the headmaster once again in his office. Dumbledore sat in his large chair grinning broadly and twinkling brightly as they entered the door.

“Children. Have a seat.”

They each sat down and with a flick of Dumbledore’s wand, they both found themselves petrified and unable to speak.

“I’m sure you know what this is.” He said as he placed a scrunched up note on the table before them. “Did you really think I wouldn’t find out? Trying to tip the Ministry off? Do you think I have not outsmarted the ministry before?” He yelled. “And though you’ve tried to keep it hidden, I can see it clear as day that you two are closer today than you were two weeks ago, if that’s even possible!

“I warned you both.” He told them, his eyes stern. “And today, you are going to stop this foolishness, because you’ve both lost important things to you this day.”

Harry wondered what the old man meant when Dumbledore reached behind him and threw a limp animal in front of Harry.

Hedwig did not move from her spot on the table. Her eyes dead.

‘No!’ Harry couldn’t move his mouth, he couldn’t even scream. The best he could manage was to cry, so he sat there in silent pain.

“I’m pretty sure you understand Harry, you left me no choice.”

“Miss Granger, you are no innocent either, and therefore, this is for you.” He levitated a sheet of paper in front of Hermione and left it there for her to read. “I assure you that it is real and already in effect.”

Hermione trembled, despite the petrification, and Dumbledore took the sheet of paper from her line of site.

“That children is for your disobedience with trying to expose my position, but as I said before, I wanted you both to stop your seeing each other, but given that you didn’t listen to me the first time, I shall do it my way.

“Miss Granger, hand in your prefects badge as soon as I release you. Ravenclaw already has two prefects from 6th year and don’t need another. You are forbidden to speak to each other in class or out of class, all of the professors will be notified of this.”

He got up and released their petrification. Harry immediately went for his wand and pointed it at Dumbledore.

Dumbledore raised his hand and sent Harry flying back into the door. “My boy, you’re a year and a half away from being able to do wordless spells, and a hundred and twenty years shy of besting me in a duel. Your muteness will disappear when you leave.” He said, waving them out.

Hermione rushed to Harry’s help and glared at Dumbledore as she helped him up and opened the door.

“Miss Granger, I shall send Professor Flitwick to pick you up in a little bit and from then on, the restrictions between you both will be in effect.”

Harry never hated Dumbledore more than he did that moment, and true to his word, their voices returned as soon as they were out of his office.

“That old bastard!” Hermione cried in a cold fury as she stormed towards Gryffindor tower. “I hate him! I will never forgive him for this!”

“What happened Hermione?” Harry asked urgently. “What did he do?”

“That sheet of paper Harry, was an jail without trial form, for my parents, signed in full. He sent them to Azkaban Harry! For being Death Eaters of all things!”

Harry couldn't believe what she had said.

"Harry, tonight, I will meet you in our meeting place. I want you to bring both of the dark arts books you've been reading from. I'm going to kill that bastard if it's the last thing I do!" She said through her tears. "Putting innocents in Jail, full of dementors, which they can't even see!"

"Books?" Harry didn't think Hermione even knew about it.

"Don't play dumb with me Harry. I've seen you carrying that book under your invisibility blanket almost every night you were out without me. Bring it tonight."

Harry nodded dumbly. He had been completely busted.

They stopped talking as students starting coming into view. When they reached the Gryffindor Tower, Hermione started packing furiously, slamming her clothes into her trunk and shrinking textbooks down to fit.

When she emerged a while later, Harry was waiting in the common room. Professor Flitwick was waiting for her looking pleased as punch. 'Of course he'd be happy to get the brightest witch in Hogwarts.' Harry mused.

Harry and Hermione hugged briefly. He felt Hermione slip something into his robe pockets, she stared at him with a fierce look in her eye.

She turned, said something to Flitwick and left Gryffindor Tower.

Harry stared at the entrance as she left.

A moment later, Ron emerged from the boy's dorm.

"Hey, wasn't that the Ravenclaw chick, Granger? What was she doing here?"

“... Ron.” Harry warned in a dangerously low voice.

“Oh yeah, sorry man. I just heard about Hedwig. Hagrid will catch that damned cat though, just you wait. Must be pretty hard losing your bird and Sirius like that though.”

Harry rounded on Ron and punched him in the face as hard as he could, sprawling Ron to the ground.

Everyone present stared at them both.

Harry thought of a million things to say, not one of them appropriate and every one of them directed at Dumbledore. He bit back his own tears once more and moved to his bedroom where he laid down. He heard a faint crumple of paper and dug out the piece of paper Hermione had given to him.

Listed on the paper was a spell, *falsus imago*, and corresponding wand movement which if Harry had sufficient magical ability, would create an image that would fool anybody not looking closely into thinking he was still in bed.

Harry hoped that it was enough to fool Dumbledore because he suddenly came to a realisation that it wasn't much of a stretch of imagination for Dumbledore to retract the order and have them given the kiss instead of imprisonment.

He realised that Dumbledore held all the chips, as he always had, and if they were truly serious about bringing him down, they would need to take some of those chips away, and so, that night, Harry moved to the Chamber of Secrets with his books cautiously and quietly, where he waited for Hermione.

When she finally came, she ignored him and walked straight up to entrance to the chamber of secrets and hissed at it, saying “Open” in very rough parselmouth. It was obvious to Harry that she had listened to him open it often enough to try replicating what he said without understanding it. Harry was surprised when it actually opened and

she jumped in ahead of him, careful not to ruin the books she was holding.

She said nothing as she moved deep into the chamber and immediately drew up a stone wall, 7th year magic. "Reducto!"

Harry brushed the powder off of himself and hugged her. Hermione wanted to cry, but her pent up anger just wouldn't allow her to.

"It's going to be alright Hermione."

"Yes... it is. I'm going to kill him, and then everything will be alright." She put her arms around Harry. "But first, I'm going to break my parents out of Azkaban."

Harry stared at her.

"That's why I need your books, and tonight, I want you to show me what you've learned."

"Hermione! Are you crazy? This is Azkaban we're talking about! There's no way two students could break in there!"

"Join me or don't Harry!" She yelled. "My parents don't belong there! They're muggles for Merlin's sake!"

Harry bit his lip, there was no way he could talk Hermione out of it, but there was no way he could let her do that alone. "I'll help, It's just hard to imagine that the both of us even attempting it."

She smiled in relief. "You have no idea how much it relieves me to hear that. I'm going to go away for a couple of weeks... to train."

"I'll come with-"

"No Harry. You should stay here and give Dumbledore the impression you're not a part of whatever I'm up to."

Harry didn't want her to go. They had just been forcefully separated by Dumbledore and he wasn't sure if he could handle two weeks without her.

"I'll come back to visit you Harry, one week from now, in here. If I'm not here then, don't panic, I will come back."

"I'll try not to..." Harry told her.

With that, Hermione pulled out her wand.

"Come on Harry, let's dual. We'll need lots of practice with that, and you can show me some of those spells."

True to her word, Hermione was not present for any of her classes the next day which caused a lot of talk amongst the Ravenclaws.

Her prediction of the headmaster's actions was also correct and Harry found himself cornered by the old man at the end of his last lesson. It was a short conversation. Dumbledore asked him if he knew where Hermione was. Harry could truthfully say to him that he didn't.

"I haven't spoken to her since yesterday." That was almost true. Technically the last time he spoke to her was about 1am, but it still felt like yesterday.

Dumbledore stared at his eyes appraisingly, but Harry refused to look away. He felt his shields probed once more.

"Very well Harry." He said at last. "If I find out that you haven't been telling the truth..." He waved his hand and a translucent image of Hedwig appeared before him, and as the image faded, so did Dumbledore, vanishing with no trace but his aura. 'Hedwig... another casualty to this man's cruelty... Just like Sirius and Hermione's poor parents.'

At the thought of her, his heart ached. He missed her terribly.

He spent the time waiting for her return by going through the books that she had left him, coincidentally 7th year textbooks. He found bookmarked the pages on wordless magic and focussed solely on that and while he found it quite easy to learn how to use such magic with his wand, the same principals just did not work without it, much to his frustration.

During the day, Harry spent his spare time researching Azkaban. He was annoyed by the lack of information that he could find, but he was hardly surprised. He surmised that the only way to get any useful information about the place would be from someone who had stayed there. Sirius was of course completely out of the question.

Hagrid was a possibility, but Harry knew that he was too close to Dumbledore to be of help. They needed someone who they knew would have no association with Dumbledore at all.

Their meeting day came and went with no sign of her. Despite her assurances that Harry shouldn't worry about her that was quite difficult to do under the circumstances. He missed her embrace and the few kisses they'd shared.

A week and a half after Harry had first discovered wordless magic, he made an important discovery. When using the wand, the magic that came from his tap had a distinct colour, and a sort of shape to it. It was only a couple of hours after he realised this that he was able to shape the magic that came from his hand and the colour of the magic from the tap came quite instinctually.

Schoolwork started to build up, but Harry didn't care. His grades were slipping and he found himself berated for it by Professor McGonagall without Hermione around, he just didn't care.

The fourteenth day passed, and Harry moved to the chamber as he had every night. When he reached the bottom, he gained the distinct impression that someone was watching him, but he saw no aura that suggested anybody was invisible.

“Harry...” Hermione’s voice rang out as Harry felt something press around him in a hug.

“Hermione?” He called.

Hermione appeared out of thin air.

“You’ve hidden your aura...” Harry asked more than stated.

“I had a feeling you’ve grown to see them too. One of the things I found out over the last couple of weeks is that magical taps naturally leak at the base, if you can plug that up, you can hide your own aura.”

Harry grinned. Another thing to practice. “You’re back then?”

She nodded. “Though I didn’t get done as much as I would have liked.”

Harry nodded. “I’ve been trying to learn as much as I can about Azkaban, and there’s practically nothing out there. We can’t break in without knowing anything about the place.”

“I’ve found that too, but I do have an idea, though I don’t think you’ll like it.”

“Tell me.”

“Voldemort... He has followers which have been in and out of there. I’m almost certain that he would be willing to help with a jailbreak as he has his own people in there.”

“Voldemort! Hermione! You’re talking about breaking out murderers and rapists!”

“I realise that Harry, and you know what? I feel nothing when I think about that. I don’t fear the idea; I don’t even loathe the idea. I just want my parents out, and safe. He would be a powerful ally in our struggle Harry. Dumbledore and Voldemort hate each other. We

know that for a fact. The idea that Voldemort is unreachable means that he, like us, has not been obliterated to Dumbledore's regime."

Harry sighed. "You're asking something very difficult of me Hermione. Voldemort wants me dead."

"And you want him dead, but what I'm proposing is that we make ourselves an invaluable asset. I'm going to kill Dumbledore Harry, and I don't care what means I do it by."

Harry understood of course. He too felt that fire that was burning inside of himself that demanded blood, and the idea of killing the man did not bother him in the slightest.

"We'll need to be more skilled than we are to stand in front of him with a room full of death eaters."

To this, his girlfriend smiled. "I think we don't need to worry about a room full of death eaters, I'm sure that Voldemort's pride will allow us to set the terms of the meeting, or at the very least, negotiate, and as for the skills..."

The chamber of secrets lit up as Hermione's aura flared white, projecting two metres from her body, she held out her hand and released a spell which impacted with the wall she had destroyed before, shaking the walls all around them.

When the dust cleared, Harry could see that Hermione had left a huge crater in the wall, demonstrating that she had achieved an insane power boost.

He gawked at her. "Don't tell me you did what I think you did!" He yelled at her in awe. "You did not sacrifice someone for this power did you?"

Hermione looked amused. "No. I simply had a theory and followed it through, dangerous as it was."

Harry looked at her. "I'm listening."

“I snapped the faucet off.”

“You can’t be serious!” Harry cried. “The amount of magic that must flow out-”

“-Is a lot Harry. Breaking it off was the easy part. It took me three days to figure out how, and then I spent six days in a trance trying to block up the hole, I won’t lie to you Harry, it was painful, but it was a theory that worked that didn’t require me to sacrifice anybody.”

Harry smiled and kissed her. “Suddenly I feel like we can actually pull this off.”

“We’ll organise the meeting with Voldemort once you’ve released yourself and we’ve trained up a bit. We’re going to need to be able to face a squadron of Death Eaters if he doesn’t like what we have to say.”

Author’s Note:

There we go, that should do for now. There are a few things I’m not too happy about, but I really wanted to release something today.

On a side note, I’m looking for a beta reader who can go over my grammar and spelling and general inconsistencies. If you’re interested, please leave a review for me or send me a private message. (Assuming I can figure out how to use them... hehe)

--Steven

Chapter 4 – Where loyalties lie

Harry took his hand off of the wall of the crater that Hermione had left in the chamber. It had been two days since Hermione had done it and he still couldn't believe the damage the spell had done. Since she had taken the limits off of her magic, the vermin around the chamber of secrets that they usually practiced their spells on had taken to exploding for even the simplest of spells, such as legilimens.

Harry had commented once "Was that obliviate or obliterate?" Earning him a smirk.

Harry was glad that he could hold her in his embrace at night time. Dumbledore did not spend nights at the school according to the Marauder's map. Harry presumed he was off obliviating some hapless wizard who had strayed from the manipulative old man's pre-determined line.

Hermione had suggested they wait a few days for the start of November for Harry to do his personal training. The idea was that it would give Dumbledore enough time to punish her and think it was an individual, isolated incident. Hermione had told him that she needed a break due to the mental stress.

Dumbledore had been furious and had punished her to going through the forbidden forest with Hagrid, looking for a missing Thestral. It had taken them six days to find where it had flown to and twice, Hagrid had left Hermione on her own so that he could go to check something out. She had ranted for lengths at a time whenever it was brought up.

The time they spent together before November, a week and a half, was spent going through the Dark Arts books that Harry had brought. Hermione applied her keen studying skills to the books, she steered Harry away from useless spells like the shoelace knotting spell and more towards the kind that would cause people's tears to turn to acid. Harry had pointed out that with an onion-eyelids spell, they could cry all the skin off their faces. Hermione had, without very seriously, written the suggestion down.

Their duelling improved, but they suffered from the problem that they were starting to find their techniques repetitious. It was becoming a match to see who could dodge the spells in succession without making a screw-up, rather than who had the highest accuracy and who could be the sneakiest.

On the night of November 2nd, Harry walked to their secret hiding place carrying his unfinished assignments as Hermione has asked. The request seemed to be completely random, but Harry had faith in her reasoning.

As he handed the papers over, he questioned her, but she shook her head and smiled broadly as she said to him, "The shrieking shack is in the outskirts Hogsmeade, and the only entrance is at the base of the whomping willow."

Harry frowned at her. "I already knew..." and then it clicked why she was telling him and he started laughing. "I can't believe it! You put the shrieking shack under fidelius? That is incredible Hermione!"

Harry's words of encouragement meant the world to her and she beamed with pride.

"I'm starting to wonder if there is a single spell you can't do."

She blushed and smiled.

Harry packed up his books and gave her a gentle kiss on the lips.

"You're going to go now then?"

Harry nodded. "Not fair you getting to do all the hard spells when I can barely pull enough magic to do them."

She nodded. "I'd like for you to be on the same level on me at the least." She held his hands. "Harry... don't leave any evidence when you leave. I want to make sure that nobody finds out about this."

"Alright." He agreed and hesitantly started walking away.

“Harry! Be careful!” Hermione called.

He simply grinned back at her and left.

The shack was just as Harry had remembered; give or take a number of holes around the place that he knew hadn't been there before. The place where Hermione had actually performed the release was in the lounge room where what was once a rug had turned to stone and the wooden floorboards around it had been charred badly, but were surprisingly solid despite the fact.

There were holes all over the walls and through the furniture which glowed with an aura of their own. It gave Harry the distinct idea that at some point, Hermione had completely lost control of her magic. Worse than that was the fact that reparo did absolutely nothing to fix anything that had been touched by her magic.

Despite the fact the room seemed rather frail, the presence of her magic calmed Harry considerably. It reminded him that he wasn't just doing this for himself. He had someone to protect. It gently blew away the fear that Harry felt and allowed him to put the food he'd taken from the kitchen down on a desk and sit down on the stone mat, which still felt soft, despite its appearance.

Closing his eyes, Harry breathed deeply until he was calm enough to envision his faucet at the greatest detail. Breaking the tap off was not as simple as it sounded as there was nothing physical with which to hit it with. Turning the tap was a matter of willing it to turn, but to break it off with nothing more than willpower seemed a bit unrealistic, but that didn't stop him from trying it.

He played with the tap a lot, trying to turn it past its maximum and stupid things such as shaping the magic into a saw and attempting to cut off the tap, which was as effective as trying to knock down a castle wall using a garden hose.

Harry wished that he had asked Hermione how she had done it, but he hadn't, and she said nothing about the experience other than how painful it was.

He looked around the tap, looking for flaws, and apart from the drip that was consistent with what Hermione had said, found nothing. He applied pressure to the spot to make it stop dripping, which was simple enough, but hardly did the job of breaking the tap at all.

As a last ditch effort, Harry turned the tap onto its full capacity and willed the tap to plug closed. This had the effect of increasing the amount of leakage coming from the hole. He willed that closed too.

It was a hard effort to keep the outlets fully plugs and not to leak as the tap built up pressure immensely, but he held it as best he could. If this way were to work, he wouldn't get it by letting go. He willed the magic to build up pressure faster, and was rewarded by hearing the tap screech as it started to bulge.

He held the pressure for as long as he could. His head and his body started to feel weak, but he held it still, he needed the tap to go if he wanted any hope in saving Hermione's parents.

After ten hours of making the pressure build, the tap shattered, breaking into a hundred thousand pieces which flew in every direction at a speed so fast that it penetrated his mind-world and ripped from every pour in his body in the real world. Harry screamed from a pain far worse than the cruciatus curse. The pain of a thousand hot knives could not come close to the pain of your body being ripped apart as if it were its own worst enemy.

He struggled to keep his mind focussed on the source of his magic which without a faucet to limit the flow coming out of it was spilling out at a rate faster than Harry could hope to use with his current repertoire of spells.

When the pain subsided enough for Harry to immerse himself back where he was needed most, he pushed against his magic as hard as he could, but it was like trying to plug a dam using an acorn.

Harry spent four days fighting his flow of magic which was causing unusual effects to occur around him in the real world. The wooden walls and floors changed from wood to bronze, then plaster, then worms, diamond and finally to back to wood, while the fidelius warped from the blast of undirected, unorganised magic.

Remus Lupin lay in bed, one arm around his blue and pink haired lover.

He was reminiscing about his olden days, "... I had to find somewhere to hide, to keep everyone safe from myself, so I stayed in the shrieking shack. You know that place in... Oh now where was it... That's right! It was in Ireland!"

"Ireland?" Tonks asked. "The shrieking shack I know was in Scandinavia."

"No wait... Wasn't it in Holland?"

"Ah! Now I remember!" Tonks declared. "It was in the middle of the Thames, right under London Bridge."

"Oh yeah... that's right, and the entrance was at Beauxbatons, right under Madame Maxine's desk."

"... That's a bit of a hike just to get to your hiding spot... are you sure you're not making this up?" She asked him.

"I kid you not! It was at under her desk!"

Harry finally started to make headway. He was tired, and he ached all over. What little vision he could gather from the real world suggested that he was bleeding all over and was in danger of dying if he didn't do something to stop the bleeding, but he couldn't do that without plugging the hole first. He was finally able to push against the magic

and slowly, centimetre by centimetre, he pushed forwards, until on his sixth day after beginning, his hand met the wall, and he held it, despite numerous leaks pooling around the concentration of his resistance.

The longer that he held it, the easier it became and the further he was able to control, to stop the leaks.

For the longest time, Harry dare not venture into the real world, lest he break his concentration, but as it became easier to hold the flow of magic, six days of hunger caught up with him. He had lost a lot of weight in his fight against his magic and so, he slowly rose from his painful catatonic state in the real world where his blood had congealed, adhering his school robes to himself and almost gluing him to the grass rug he lay upon.

He was covered in scabs from head to toe and it was painful to move as the scabs pulled against the skin. Cautiously, Harry shaped a small amount of overflowing magic and rasped, "Accio food." It hurt like hell to move, but Harry wolfed down everything that didn't have glowing edges from residue magic.

He thought to try calling Dobby, but Dobby had no idea where he was so he wouldn't have been able to come anyway.

After eating everything he could, he fell asleep, and in his dreams, he was still pushing against his magic until it became instinctual to hold it closed at which point he started to wake up.

Harry felt weak and anaemic, but felt confident enough that he could keep his aura hidden when under disillusionment.

He moved to the passageway back to Hogwarts and released half of his power as he chanted, "Eradico"

He quickly started moving through the passageway while struggling to cap the magic that was escaping.

'It's going to take me a while to stop my magic after using it until I get used to this I think.' He thought to himself as a dust ball flew down

the passageway. Harry didn't look back as the shrieking shack exploded, wiping every trace of the place away until there was nothing but a large crater left in the ground. It would make for an interesting sight when Hermione dropped her fidelius charm.

It took Harry an excruciatingly long time to get from the site back to Hogwarts. He wondered if it was as painful for Hermione as it was for him to move the distance. As he approached the whomping willow, he could see it was daytime outside, though he had no idea what day it actually was.

He double checked to make sure he wasn't leaking any magic and left for the Hospital Wing to liberate a blood replenishing potion and a skin-gro-better, the sun blinding him as soon as he was exposed to the outside atmosphere.

The feeling of complete invisibility gave Harry a sense of freedom the likes of which he had never experienced before in his life. With Madam Pomfrey looking after a young Hufflepuff's throat which periodically swelled up like a frog to produce a reverberating 'croak!', Harry was free to just wander into her office and take the potions and walk out without her being any the wiser.

From there, Harry moved to the chamber to wait until Hermione was free to come see him in the night and to give his body relief from all the movement.

Dumbledore grumbled to himself, his mind only half on the meeting.

"The Dark Lord is continuing negotiations with the dementors," Severus Snape announced from the back. "On top of that it would also seem he is taking in a fresh batch of Death Eaters, fresh out of your school headmaster."

Dumbledore shook his head, feigning disappointment. 'It matters not. Those lambs are easy enough to keep in their pens.'

“That is troubling.” He told them. “We’ll have to further efforts to make students aware of the dangers of joining Voldemort. I shall speak to our Defence teacher.”

“With all due respect sir, the influx seems to be due to pressure from the children’s parents who are all known Death Eaters, give or take a couple.”

“Speaking of wayward students, has anybody had any luck finding Harry Potter?” The old man asked. The boy had eluded him for more than a week now which meant that either he was in a heavily warded area or under the fidelius. All of his attempts at finding the student had ended up with nothing, just like when Hermione Granger had disappeared. He wondered what the chances were that they were seeing each other at night while he was out of the school, but his spies in the dormitories had said that they were in bed all night without fail which was not to say that they couldn’t be deceived, but it seemed unlikely.

After her hiatus, he had put detection wards in place on Granger’s dormitory, and not once had they been triggered at night by her. He had investigated a couple of incidents to once find Padma Patil studying, and the other he found Lisa Turner stealing down to the kitchens for a midnight snack.

No, unless they had been passing notes on paper, he was sure that the incidents were isolated.

“No, we’ve looked all over London and he’s nowhere to be found Albus.” Moody responded. “Wherever he is, he’s beyond our finding.”

“Has he died perhaps?” Arthur asked uneasily.

“I could be so lucky.” Snape replied sourly.

“Oh! Don’t say things like that Arthur! Ginny would be devastated!” Molly cried.

Albus was happy to hear Molly say that, it meant that his plans for the youngest Weasley were still viable in the likely event that the boy was still alive. He hated the fact that in order for Harry to fulfil his role in the grand scheme, he needed a romantic interest. The fact that he had taken to liking the one girl he couldn't easily control was a problem. A very large problem. It was far better for the boy to be interested in one of his puppets. Yes, that's what Ginny was, a puppet with invisible strings.

Dumbledore would be a happy man when Voldemort was dead and he could remove the Boy Who Lived's head off of his shoulders. Ginny's distress would be rewarding to watch when she hears that neither of them survived the conflict, and then wipe her memory as if it never happened.

He pondered on whether it would be in his best interest to rid himself altogether of Miss Granger's influence over Harry. He decided he would use that punishment when he knew for a fact that the boy was actively disobeying him.

The old man stroked his beard. "I doubt that he is dead, let us keep looking. What news of the Ministry?"

When Harry stirred, he felt something wet on his forehead, but his body felt infinitely better than it had before he fell asleep, though his limbs were stiff from what he was wearing.

"Hey," Said a soft voice. "You're awake. How do you feel?"

"I feel like a mummy..." Harry replied.

"I've had to wrap you like one." Hermione replied. "Your clothes were ruined."

"You took off my clothes?" Harry asked, blushing a deep red.

Hermione too went red. "I had to! They were stuck to your skin with blood. I spent half the day looking for healing spells to help." There was a nervous silence. "I tried not to look."

Harry just laughed gently. "Thanks... for helping me. Perhaps I'll call us even."

Hermione slapped him gently as she laughed. "Harry!"

He grinned and pushed himself upright.

"You should be able to go to classes again tomorrow." She pulled a few scrolls from her pocket. "I've caught you up on your essays. That will be your excuse for being missing classes. I'm pretty sure I copied your style well enough."

Harry would have been stunned, but he realised that Hermione's focus right now was far from schoolwork. Every time she looked away, Harry could see the sad look in her eyes that told him she was thinking about her parents. "I- Thanks Hermione... Then tomorrow I guess... we'll go pay a visit to Malfoy."

"You think we should use Draco for this? There are plenty of other Death Eaters in the school, Blaise Zabini seems like a better choice to me."

"If everything goes sour with Voldemort, It would be nice to have him caught in the crossfire."

"Suddenly Draco doesn't sound like a bad idea..." She replied with a grin.

Harry started to unwind the bandages from his hand and arms where the scabs had disappeared altogether.

"Reckon we'll come out alive?"

“I don’t think for a moment we won’t.” She replied tartly as she retrieved the clothes she’d grabbed for Harry from behind her. “I’m sorry I made you go through that.”

Harry shook his head. “Don’t be. I’ve needed to raise my abilities anyway.” He laughed. “To think that he told me love would win the war against Voldemort.”

“Dumbledore did?”

Harry nodded. “After the ministry incident, he took me back to his office and gave me the prophecy that Voldemort was after.”

Hermione was stunned. “You know it?”

Harry nodded and recited the prophecy which he had committed to memory on that night, to which Hermione listened with intense concentration.

After she had listened to it, Hermione shook her head. “Something doesn’t add up there... Why would he have told you the prophecy with the intention of obviating you later anyway?”

“I saw it in his pensive, so I’m pretty sure that it’s real.”

Hermione seemed less than convinced. “I don’t trust anything that comes from that man.”

“Just a thought, but perhaps he was hoping to put it in my subconscious... I don’t really know how obliviate actually works...”

Hermione put on her thoughtful face as Harry took his robe from her and put it around him so that he could take off his lower bandages without exposing himself any more than he felt comfortable with. “I don’t know...”

With all of his clothes put on his body, Harry felt a lot better, more normal.

“So, show me how you went.” His girlfriend gestured at the wall they’d been casually drilling into.

Harry let go of his magic and cast reparo with all of his strength, every piece of rubble lying around the room flew together, restoring the wall the same way it had been the day they had come down here.

Hermione blinked a few times, trying to get his aura out of her eyes. “Well I’m impressed. Just remember to at least pretend to leak magic or Dumbledore will know that something is up.” She told him sternly. “If you’re feeling ok, how about we test our shields against each other?”

Harry entered McGonagall’s classroom and felt every eye in the room bore into him.

“You’re about a week and a half late for class mister Potter. I hope you have a good excuse.” She said through pursed lips.

“I had to take some time off to catch up. I was really behind in my assignments.” He replied.

“That’s a rather pitiful excuse given that nobody has seen you for practically two weeks without warning that you had gone anywhere.”

“Sorry about that...”

“Have a seat mister Potter, I’m sure that the Headmaster will have some words for you later today.” Harry shrugged and took his seat. To his surprise, Harry was still able to use his wand as long as he kept his mind clear when doing so. It made it all the easier to dutifully paid attention while waiting for the class to end.

Harry stepped outside of the classroom and stepped into one of the lesser used corridors.

“Seems like I lost fifteen galleons,” Draco Malfoy’s drawl echoed behind him. “I was so sure you’d been eaten in the forest.”

“Sorry to disappoint you.” Harry replied. “Got a moment Malfoy? I want a word with you in private.”

“Like I’d be caught dead talking with you.”

“I’d prefer to avoid that as you’d be useless to me dead at this point.” Harry replied flippantly, causing wands to be raised at him.

The boy who lived sighed and took out his wand.

Crabb and Goyle fired a couple of prank spells at Harry, which he easily sidestepped, but created a protego to protect himself from Draco’s cutting curse.

Harry returned fire, hitting Crabb and Goyle dead on, the former with a spell to shrink the size of his feet, and the latter causing his eyebrows to grow uncontrollably. Within seconds Goyle was essentially blind and Crabb was trying to stand up on less than adequate feet.

Harry scored a petrificus totalis on Draco, and with a wave and tap with his wand, disillusioned them both.

He guided Draco to the classroom that he and Hermione had decided on the night before, mindful that Dumbledore could be disillusioned anywhere.

When they reached their destination, Harry released Draco and Hermione appeared out of thin air next to him, casting a privacy charm on the door.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Draco screamed.

“We need a favour.” Hermione said to him. “We want you to deliver a message to Voldemort.”

“I have no contact with the Dark Lord!” Draco spat at them.

“Well then you can pass the message to your father and have him relay it.” Harry responded.

“Tell your ‘Dark Lord’ that both Harry and I want his help.”

Draco grinned and after a second broke out laughing.

“You’ve got to be kidding me! You want his help? He wants you dead Potter and even I wouldn’t mind seeing your mudblood friend smeared from one end of England to the other.”

Hermione waved her hand nonchalantly. “We want his help to break a couple of people out of Azkaban, and I don’t think that he would mind the extra help breaking out some of his own.”

Malfoy gaped. “You’re shitting me.”

“Here’s the terms of the meeting. One, we want Voldemort alone, or at the very least, a minimum council, and two, no Snape or other spies. Period. We want to meet him after midnight and before 4am, he can chose the day and the venue.”

Draco thought about it. It was a good opportunity for him, handing Potter to the Dark Lord on a platter would mean instant recognition and curry his favour with the Dark Lord. He nodded slowly. “I have a condition of my own for doing this, I want to be there to see him take you both apart.”

“Then it’s a deal.” Harry told him. “One thing Draco, you give no word of this to anybody except him. I trust you are a decent occlumens?”

“You have to be around that blood traitor Headmaster.” Draco sneered.

Harry nodded in agreement. “Don’t waste our time Draco, we’ll be expecting a quick reply, one to each of us.”

With that, they both disappeared and released the privacy spells.

Harry managed to avoid the headmaster until dinner time when he especially pulled Harry from his food to discuss his truancy.

He beckoned Harry down to the dungeons and gestured him into a room with Argus Filch waiting by.

Harry was caught completely off guard when chains shot out from the walls and clamped on his arms and feet stretching him out in mid air.

“Harry, the teachers have been telling me that you spent your time away doing homework, is this true?”

“Yes sir,” He replied nervously.

“Where were you that had such strong wards that nobody could find you?”

“I was in one of the rooms, I can’t tell you where it is, Fred and George put it under fidelius last year.”

A thoughtful look appeared in Dumbledore’s face and he mumbled to himself. “I always did wonder why I could never find that room again... I thought I’d just lost it.”

Harry wondered if for a moment the twins had actually put a room under fidelius. It made him wonder how Filch would have escaped from the room.

Dumbledore drew up a seat and sat in it. “I want to assume for a moment that you’re lying to me and that you’ve been either seeing Miss Granger somehow, plotting behind my back, or doing anything that I would not approve of.”

“But I’m not!” Harry insisted.

“Well, I don’t know that for a fact Harry, as you won’t let me into your head to see that for myself, so we’re going to do it my way for a bit.” He replied. “Here’s the way we shall work tonight. I’ve allowed Mister Filch special dispensation to use the whip for tonight. You will be whipped Twenty times, and after every whip, you’re going to repeat to me that you were doing homework. If, after that I find that you’ve been lying to me, I will kill Miss Granger.”

“What?” Harry exclaimed. “You bastard! Leave Hermione out of this! I’ve done as you asked and stayed away from her!”

“Oh please! May I do it?” Filch begged the headmaster. Harry stared at him with abject horror.

The Headmaster flicked his wand at Filch and said to Harry, “Filch always has been one of my most favourite people to work with. He was such a kind and gentle boy, but a few years of making him relive murders he didn’t commit, and this is who he has become. He’s not even a squib, but he doesn’t know that. I daresay Miss Lovegood has a few quirks, I would not have to do much to have her put out the flame of Miss Granger’s life with little suspicion on her part.”

He flicked his wand again at Filch. “Well, we’ll find out soon enough if you’re lying to me, won’t we?” The old man replied as he gestured for Filch to start.

With the crack of a whip, Harry screamed as a searing pain leapt across his back and simultaneously, he received a blow to his mental shields.

‘So that’s his plan is it?’ Harry thought to himself. ‘I will not break for him. I refuse to!’

“Well Harry, do you still say you doing homework?”

“I was doing homework in a classroom.” Harry insisted and felt another crack across his back, again he screamed.

“I’ve missed this.” Filch was grinning madly.

Harry braved all twenty whips with gritted teeth and determination, but refused to bow to either Filch or Dumbledore’s attacks.

He panted as the chains released him and dropped him on all fours. Harry desperately wanted to release all of his power and shout the most dangerous unforgivable at the man, but the voice of reason in his head, which had taken on the sound of Hermione, told him that without knowing what Dumbledore was capable, it was imperative that he kept his ace up his sleeve.

Dumbledore bowed his head to the fallen boy, took a bottle from his robes and uncorked it and then poured it over Harry’s back, causing him severe pain and attacked him one last time, catching Harry completely unaware, Harry just managed to get a hold of his shield before it broke.

“Very well then Harry, you are free to go.”

Harry dragged himself up from the floor and started to walk from the room. “What happened to the Dumbledore I knew?” He asked the man as he passed.

“That Dumbledore never existed in reality Harry. This is the unpleasant reality that you are forced to live with. Far better for you to have accepted my obli-viations and live without worry. Now remember what I said about lying to me. The next thing you’ll loose would be Miss Granger, so if you are lying, I suggest you lessen your ties to her now.”

“I haven’t spoken to her.” Harry said weakly as he walked from the room.

“obliviate.”

Harry clenched his fists in anger. He thought not to speak to Hermione that night as he figured Dumbledore might be actively

watching him, coupled with the fact that he didn't want Hermione worrying over his back.

He congratulated himself on holding back, but he was dangerously nearing all he could take. If he didn't find a way to constructively use the powers he had on something more than rats and spiders, he would do something he'd regret. The threat on Hermione was below the belt and would not be forgotten, but Harry knew that Dumbledore was in for a surprise if he tried to kill her, especially if he made Filch or Luna to 'do the honours' as he'd probably put it.

He frowned and promised that if Voldemort didn't send a reply to him within the next two days, he would kill one death eater in the school per day until he replied.

Unfortunately, Harry never did get to try out his spells against Crabb or Goyle as Draco replied the next day, slamming into him and slipping a piece of paper into his pocket by sleight of hand. "Watch it you incompetent fool!" He screamed at Harry and stormed off.

He will meet you tonight, I am to take you both via portkey. Meet me at the room you spoke to me in at half past midnight. Do not be late or else.

Harry grinned and silently made the piece of paper combust.

The day did not go fast enough for Harry and he was very careful with placing his charms to give the impression he was still at the school that night.

He arrived at the classroom half an hour early where Hermione was already waiting.

"I had a nice chat with Dumbledore last night." He said as he came in. "Told me that if he found out I was lying to him, he'd kill you, and then had Filch whip me."

“He actually had Filch whip you?” Hermione couldn’t believe she had just heard that. “Oooh! I’ll whip him!”

“He can whip me as much as he likes, he can break every finger, but if he dares come after you I would bring this whole castle down with everyone in it.”

Hermione scowled.

“ So we’re really going to do this?” Harry asked her.

“We really are Harry.”

Harry ran one hand through her hair. “I love you.”

“I love you too, so don’t die on me.”

Harry nodded. “You too.” He brought her lips to hers.

“Oh please!” Malfoy’s voice penetrated the room. “That was the last thing I needed to see, but I suppose you’re both saying your goodbyes before you walk into this suicide.”

“That remains to be seen.” Harry replied. “You got the portkey?”

Draco pulled out a live snake out of his robes. “This is it.”

Harry moved to put his hand on the snake and it struck at him, missing by a fingernail.

“Behave yourself, or I’ll cut off your head.” Harry hissed at it.

The snake begrudgingly reached towards him with its mouth closed.

“Let’s go Hermione.”

“Move it mudblood.”

Hermione gripped the snake and they were portkeyed into the same graveyard that Harry had witnessed Voldemort's return in.

Harry and Hermione both assessed the situation immediately. Voldemort was sitting on top of a grave with his arms crossed looking bemused. They could clearly make out two silhouette auras shining behind graves.

"You actually came Potter." Voldemort replied, clapping his hands.

Harry pointed his wand at one grave and blew it up. "I'm here to talk, not for an ambush." He gestured his wand to the grave protecting the other death eater. "You can tell that one to come out too."

Voldemort inclined his head. "Bellatrix, quit hiding like a coward."

Bellatrix rose from her crouch and moved beside Voldemort while Lucius stared at his son from behind them. Harry gripped his wand tight, how he wanted right now to separate every limb from her body for what she did to Sirius.

"So, the young Draco tells me you have an interest in Azkaban, and you want my help to break someone out of it..."

Harry nodded. "That's correct,"

"My parents have been framed and put in there."

"And what do I care for a couple of muggles mudblood?" The Dark Lord queried as he stood up and approached them.

"I don't expect you to care for them." She replied tartly. "I'm going to break them out, with your help or without, but I figured that you had a few people there you wouldn't mind having back and it would make my life a lot easier."

"I could make your life a lot easier by taking it from you." The wizard replied. "I'm waiting for you to tell me what I want to hear."

“How about this:” Harry said as he stared into the red eyes of his nemesis. “You help us break out her parents. I help you kill Dumbledore.”

Harry had caught his interest at that point. “Well now, that is something a bit more interesting. It sounds to me like the old fool put them away as a punishment to the mudblood did he not? Why suddenly the idea that I can help, am I not your enemy as well.”

“He wants me to kill you, be sure of that, but I will not do it. I make my own decisions, and I would rather aide a Dark Lord who kills openly and admits it than a would-be Champion of the Light who controls everyone by taking away their ability to think for themselves and stabs people in their backs.”

“That is true enough, the nature of Albus Dumbledore is not a clean slate, far from it. However, you are useless to me boy, you know nothing of use and Bella has told me all about your ‘righteous anger’.”

“You want righteous Anger?” Harry yelled at him. “I’ll give you anger!”

He pointed his wand and let go as much magic as he could at Bellatrix and screamed out “crucio!” Bellatrix dropped to the floor screaming where she stayed until Hermione put her hand on his shoulder.

“That’s enough Harry, you’ve made your point.”

“Oh, have I?” He asked her furiously. “How about I kill her? Would that show any usefulness?”

Voldemort’s eyes seemed filled with Mirth as if he had just been given a Christmas present. “She is too useful to allow her killed.” He said as he watched her writhe on the ground as she recovered. “Get up Bellatrix! You’re pathetic!”

He snapped his fingers. “Lucius, bring in two of my toys. You can prove your usefulness by killing some prominent figures who have

failed to show me the respect I deserve.” He placed a hand on Hermione’s cheek where she gazed at him with death in her eyes. “If you can do that, then we’ll see about if you’re worthy of my help.”

Harry nodded. “Hermione, make sure there’s an anti-apparition field around.”

She nodded and raised her wand in an arc. “It is done.”

A second later, Lucius returned with two half-dead figures, Draco smiled cruelly as Percy Weasley was brought before them together with Igor Karkaroff.

“H-Harry and Hermione! Don’t tell me he got you too! Run! Save yourselves!” Percy called to them.

“So I just kill him right?” Harry asked him as he raised his wand.

“Indulge me Potter, I like to see others in pain.”

Percy’s eyes widened in fear and Karkaroff stood stone-faced as Harry started obliged the sadist.

Percy was no friend of his. What more was he than a puppet of both Fudge, and by at least proxy, Dumbledore? He was in the hands of the death eaters and therefore dead regardless of whether it was Harry or someone else that killed him.

Harry started with the two spells he’d been dying to try on someone live and turned Percy’s eyes to acid, and, together with the onion eyelids charm, worked as perfectly as predicted. Harry’s once proud heart was stone cold to the screams that echoed through the night. He took his time messing with many of the charms he’d been dying to try, breaking bones, giving him gills to breathe with, and finally, “Accio Percy’s heart.”

The heart flew into Harry’s hands, snapping veins as it shot towards him. Harry caught it with his hands, squeezing it as if he’d just caught

the snitch causing whatever blood was left in it to splatter everywhere around him.

Harry narrowed his eyes as Percy's head fell down, dead from shock. He handed the heart to Voldemort.

Hermione's eyes were alight with anger as she imagined that Karkaroff was Dumbledore. Having extracted all of his teeth and burnt holes in his skin until it showed bone, she relished making him suffer and would not let him die easily as she burned off a lot of anger that had been building for months. She hoped that it would feel this satisfactory with the real thing.

She stepped up to him. "Have you had enough?" She asked him. "Do you wish for mercy?" Karkaroff nodded weakly. "I will not." She kicked him in the face. Her kick was less than spectacular, achieving nothing. "Imperio!" she yelled.

"I want you to gouge your eyes out." She stared coldly at him as he did it. "Now, you will put your hand down your throat until you choke to death."

Igor Karkaroff did not fight the imperious, her last command was less than pleasant, and the last thing he knew before he died that there was perhaps a person who was more willing to inflict pain than Bellatrix LeStrange.

Draco stared at the body as Igor finished gagging on his hand, he had seen people tortured to death before, but he could not have for a moment imagined that mudblood Granger, who had an impressive encyclopaedia of legal spells, would ever use the list of spells he had witnessed today.

"Incendio."

Voldemort laughed, not a laugh of malice, but one of utter delight.

"I am impressed." He replied from his headstone where he had chosen to sit for half of the show. "You've entertained me more than I

had hoped tonight, so let us negotiate. You wish my help to break into Azkaban, you've got it. But there will be a test I shall give you first."

Hermione looked at him from the heap that was once the headmaster of Durmstrang. "We're listening."

"You will retrieve for me the Sorting Hat from Dumbledore's office. He has also has a set of scales. Destroy it. And lastly, I think I would like those awful lemon drops he serves to poison the next person he offers one to."

"Is that all?" Harry asked. "Timeframe?"

"Three days. Draco will have the portkey by tomorrow night." Voldemort looked at the boy who nodded. "In order to break into Azkaban, you will join me, you will train as assassins, remove a few people I don't like and spy for me. When you are ready, we shall retrieve your parents."

Harry nodded. "Agreed, on a few of my own conditions."

Voldemort gestured for him to continue.

"We won't take the Dark Mark. We—"

"—All of my death eaters have the dark mark, why should I make an exception to either of you?" He asked them.

"At some point in the near future, one of us three, is going to kill Dumbledore, make no mistake about that. If you mark us with the Dark Mark, we immediately loose our edge on any target skilled enough to see the distortion that thing makes on Auras."

Voldemort slowly nodded.

"The Dark Mark is my assurance that I will not be betrayed, what do I do for your loyalty then?"

Harry wasn't sure how to make that kind of promise.

“We’ll sign a contract, magically binding.” Hermione answered for him. “The conditions of this contract are that we will not break our alliance to you unless you give us due cause to. If you decide you don’t want us around, we reserve the right to retaliate.”

“If you prove your worth, I shall not have need to remove you.”

“Alright then,” Harry continued. “We don’t wear that death eater garb, you want us to assassinate, we’ll leave our own mark that people will learn to fear.

“And lastly, you keep our bargain a secret, if you bring us before Severus Snape or anybody who plays both sides, you ruin our chance at Dumbledore and the deal is off.”

Voldemort shook his head. “I will not agree to the last condition, but I will give you warning. If you want to prevent your identity, you can use a glamour. It would not do for me to refer to you then as I do, so what shall I call you both?”

“Baron and Baroness Black.” Hermione told him, to which Bellatrix scowled.

Harry nodded in appreciation.

“And I have one more condition to add.” Hermione said, looking around. Harry raised an eyebrow. He didn’t think he’d left anything out.

“For each time someone calls me ‘mudblood’, I take a finger.” She stared at Draco, who scowled.

Voldemort smiled nastily. “If not for the fact that it would make my death eaters less effective in battle, I would love to watch them find out the hard way. I shall warn them.”

They bowed their heads and walked back to Draco.

“Do that test, and we shall have an alliance.”

They both looked determined as they grabbed a hold of the snake and portkeyed out of the graveyard.

“When do we get to kill him and that mudblood?” Bellatrix asked him.

“I’m starting to have second thoughts about it, if the boy and the mudblood can prove themselves willing to do as I say, they will be most an interesting pair to watch.”

Lucius approached them from his rear spot. “My Lord, I cannot believe you allowed those two blood traitors to set terms!”

“Unlike simpletons like you who joined me for the promise of power, and make no mistake, you will have it; they both have a very specific reason for joining which I find myself wanting to help them. That old skrewt is too strong for me to kill, his duelling skills are unparalleled if he does not restrain himself. Having two children such as them would make my job much easier.”

“They’ll betray you once their cause is seen to.”

“No, they will continue to assassinate the people I tell them to, once the old fool is dead, they shall take the mark, just as the rest of you.”

Author’s Note:

Geez, almost grossed myself out writing that chapter... and to think... that isn’t even the worst thing I have planned...

Next chapter, stealing the sorting hat, some training, and depending how I go for a word count, an assassination or two.

--Steven

Chapter 05 – The Barons Black

They arrived together into the same room they'd departed from.

Draco stared at both of them intently.

"I hate you Potter, I'll make that much clear; but I'll give credit where due and say that facing Voldemort like that took guts. We'll see if you have the guts to steal from Dumbledore though..."

He turned to leave. "See ya Potter, mud-"

"Draco," Hermione started. "Do you think for a second I wasn't serious when I said I'd take your finger, you've got another thing coming."

"Whatever," Draco replied carelessly as he walked out.

"How hard do you think it would be to have Draco framed for something as soon as we poison those lemon drops?" Hermione asked Harry.

"Now now baroness," Harry replied sourly. "I'm kind of hoping that it would be Snape."

"I'm sorry about that Harry, I said it without thinking it through."

"As soon as word gets back to Dumbledore, he'll know what we're up to immediately."

"They're a code-name Harry. We'll do everything we can to give an image contrary to a baron and baroness."

"Torn Muggle clothes, bad English accents and missing teeth?"

"Well, we'll stick with Muggle clothes, but personally, I think we should make the name 'Black' something to fear." She replied.

“Oh, they’ll fear the name alright, Malfoy went totally pale when you made Karkaroff gouge his eyes out. I can’t help but think you enjoyed yourself a bit too much.”

Hermione smirked. “And you didn’t take your frustrations out on Percy I’m sure.”

“Hmph.”

Hermione sighed. “I should do some research. We have three days in which I have to make myself a potent poison that won’t be blatantly obvious, and preferably, hard to cure.”

“That’s your department.” Harry replied. “If you’re going to do that, I’m going to hang around Dumbledore’s office for a bit tomorrow.”

Hermione frowned. “Do it on the second night love. Tomorrow night you should spend looking up some detection spells and how to circumvent them, we both know that Dumbledore can’t detect us when we’re invisible, but what’s to say he doesn’t have better defences on his office?”

Harry nodded and they parted for the night with a kiss.

Harry’s research lead him to find detection charms that would both be of great use to himself as well as give him stuff to look out for.

It worked out well for him that the past week, Professor Flitwick had been explaining the basics of setting wards. ‘Quite an interesting coincidence...’

Harry had spent his evening before curfew invisibly watching Dumbledore’s office.

It sucked being invisible because he couldn't read a book without the book being visible. He watched as the unmistakable aura of Dumbledore approached him and the statue.

"Candy Canetoads."

Harry smiled to himself and walked away to make an appearance before the Gryffindors.

"Hey Harry," A red-headed fifth year called to him as he entered the room.

"Ginny? Hey."

"Umm... Harry, I was wonder if perhaps..."

'If perhaps what?'

"Would you go out with me some time?"

Harry frowned. This was probably one of Dumbledore's schemes to ensure he stayed away from Hermione.

"I... err... I'm pretty far behind in my school work," He told her. "Let me think about it..."

Ginny nodded. "But that's not a 'no' right?"

Harry desperately wanted to say that there wasn't a chance in hell, but it sounded to him like she was intended to talk about it with someone, and it wouldn't be a good idea to reject her if she were going to answer to Dumbledore.

"Let me get some assignments done, and I'll think about it in the meantime." He repeated.

She smiled broadly and traipsed off to where a couple of Gryffindors her age were sitting.

Harry shook his head as he went to his room to rest until it was time for him to attempt Dumbledore's office.

He looked at the map before leaving his dorm, ensuring that Dumbledore was nowhere in the school before he laid down his charms and left for his office.

Harry moved as quickly as he could without making a sound towards the office, uttering the password as he moved past quickly.

As he approached the door into Dumbledore's office, Harry muttered the spell that would reveal any wards for a short period of time and opened the door. The wards appeared as either domes around objects or paper-thin walls around various objects. Each ward had runes written on them which described what the ward was.

Harry's knowledge of runes was limited at best as it was one of Hermione's strengths, but Harry knew the ones he was looking for.

Much to his surprise, there were no wards to notify access to the office, only individual wards on certain items.

As he quietly closed the door, he started taking inventory of the different items scattered around the room, the sorting hat was exactly where it always was and the lemon drops were on the guest table Dumbledore was so often sitting them at. Harry started walking through the room looking for the scales which Voldemort had spoken of.

He found them sitting on the opposite side of the room, close to Dumbledore's pensive. He stared at the pensive for a moment and wondered to himself what would happen if he cast 'obliviate' at the pensive.

There were charms cast on the scales and the sorting hat which showed up as wards, both had tracking charms, the scales had some runes which Harry could not identify, but did his best to commit them to memory. If he didn't know them, there was a high possibility that Hermione would.

Having located each of the objects he was after, he used 'finite' to cancel the ward visibility and was about to exit when he saw a brief movement.

He wondered if he had been busted casting the spell and as he looked where the movement had come from, realised that it was Fawkes, sleeping. As he watched the bird, an idea came to him and he exited the room, heading straight to the chamber where Hermione was brewing the poison they'd use.

"Hey sweetie," He called.

She looked up and smiled. "How'd it go?"

"Got any way to enchant a stasis?"

"Sure, but it's rather exhausting. Why? What did you find?"

"Oh... nothing." Harry grinned mischievously. "There's nothing special about the room, no wards protecting access. There are individual wards around selected objects including the scales. Tracking charms on both scales and the sorting hat. Nothing out of the ordinary about the drops, but that's expected.

"The only thing we need to worry about is a ward on the scales. Do you have any idea what this ward might be?" He asked, sketching the runes on a book.

"It looks like runes of disinterest. I'd imagine that if you went to look at it you'd be forced to look somewhere else instead. Easy to circumvent." She replied. "Careful, don't drop that anywhere near my potion, last thing I want is to give them a slight gut-ache instead of death."

Harry chuckled to himself. "How long before you're done?"

"Almost finished mixing, then it's got to brew for an hour."

"That will be cutting it close..." Harry mused.

“We’re running out of time. Tomorrow is the last day for this.”

Harry nodded. “It will be fine. I hope Voldemort won’t mind if I borrow something of Dumbledore’s for myself.”

Hermione added a pinch of leaves of some kind. “I don’t care, just make sure that it doesn’t point to us at all.”

“Morsmordre?”

Hermione gaped at him, and then grinned quite evilly. “If we got busted doing that—”

“The consequences would be as bad as if Dumbledore caught us together.”

“Let’s do it!”

Harry and Hermione waited until Dumbledore had been gone for half an hour before they snuck up on his room.

Just to be cautious, Harry cast the ward detection spell a second time to make sure nothing had changed, cancelling it before they did any work on the room.

“I’ll do the lemon drops first, then you destroy the scales while I get the hat.”

“While you’re doing the lemon drops I’ll—”

The fireplace lit up and McGonagall stepped into the room. “Honestly, a man his age shouldn’t have any problems remembering the minutes.” She marched to his desk and grabbed the piece of paper in question and looked around the room as if she felt someone there. Not seeing anyone, she walked away and to the fireplace. “Grimmauld Place” and was gone.

“Fawkes.” Harry whispered as he moved to the bird.

He had no idea where Hermione was, but was pretty sure that she was taking care of the lemon drops.

“Avada Kedavra!” Harry poured his intent into his hand and Fawkes was caught completely off guard as the spell hit the bird and he exploded into flames.

Harry pulled out the pot he’d stolen off of Professor Sprout and banished all that was left of the bird into the pot and cast the stasis spell that Hermione had taught him on the pot, preventing the phoenix from being reborn from it’s ashes.

“Harry!” Hermione exclaimed. “I can’t believe you just did that!”

“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth I say...” He panted. “Get the Hat.”

Harry moved to the scales and very quickly stabbed the ward with his wand and poured his magic into it, shattering the ward.

With the ward out of the way it was purely trivial to destroy the scales.

“Done.”

“I’ve got the hat.” Hermione replied. “Let’s get out of here.”

Harry was about to leave when something else caught his eye. ‘The sword of Gryffindor...’ He checked it as quickly as he could and failing to find anything on it, liberated it.

“ Lets go!” Harry disillusioned the sword and ran to the door, swinging around to cast “Morsmordre” and carefully closed the door.

Together, they quietly moved to their meeting place with Draco.

“You both wanna keep me waiting any longer?” Draco sneered as they appeared.

“We were having a bit of fun.” Harry replied. “Lets get this done, I’d like to make a show of being in bed when Dumbledore comes back.”

The snake behaved itself as they put their hand on it and a little later, found themselves in the graveyard once more.

Voldemort was waiting when Harry and Hermione arrived, Hat, sword and pot in hand.

“There’s a few more things there than I asked for.” Voldemort hissed.

Harry shrugged. “Dumbledore killed my familiar, so I killed his.” He replied nonplussed. “But I will apologize for the sword. I hope you don’t mind, but I blamed the damages on the Death Eaters.”

“The Dark Mark?”

They both nodded.

“Perfect. You have exceeded my expectations.” Voldemort grinned nastily. “You have earned my help with Azkaban.”

Voldemort pulled out a couple of black cloaks from his robe, they were horribly torn and looked almost slimy. “You said you wanted to leave your own mark.” He threw them at their feet.

“These look like Dementor cloaks.” Hermione mused.

“I had a minor disagreement with them during our last negotiations.” To which Bellatrix giggled.

Lucius moved forward and placed a couple of black masks on top of the cloaks.

“These will be the mark of the Barons Black.” Voldemort announced. “Assuming you are satisfied.”

They each picked up the cloaks, they felt very light, and despite their holes, the cape itself seemed to emit a darkness of its own.

“They’ll do nicely.” Hermione told them.

“Yes, this will give people something to fear.”

Voldemort looked at them expectedly. “Well? Put them on. You will wear these before me from now on, you will be known as Baron Black and Baroness Black, or Barons Black from now on amongst the Death Eaters.”

Harry swung his cloak over his shoulders and felt himself enveloped in darkness. He had expected his hands to suddenly shrivel up and develop scabs and a grey tinge, but they stayed the same.

The cloak was warmer than he expected, not an ounce of the coldness that he’d expected.

He reached down and placed the mask on his face, it had no way of staying on, short of the weak sticking charm applied to it.

Harry looked around, surprised to find that the mask did nothing to hinder his sight.

Harry looked at Hermione to find that she was wearing her cloak, it did indeed envelop her in an unnatural darkness, the only way that you could tell that she was female was from the curve of her breasts against the cloak. The mask had glowing red eyes which was very different from the image of a dementor.

It would take some time to get used to being dressed as the one thing he once feared most, despite the obvious differences.

Voldemort nodded. “If you wish to stay in my good books, you will ensure that you perform well, do not slip up and will follow my orders without hesitation or question.

“I do not bargain with my Death Eaters Barons Black, I have made special allowance for the both of you, consider it the greatest honour and understand that with special allowances, I expect the very best from you.

“You will call me ‘My Lord’ from now on.”

Voldemort beckoned to Bellatrix to come forward and held out his hand where she put the magical contract they had devised.

When he unrolled it and handed them a quill, Hermione hesitated for a brief moment and waved her wand over the top of the paper, checking for invisible clauses and hard to see fine print.

A very fine print appeared under the last item, detailing Hermione’s added condition. She had passed another test from the Dark Lord.

“Very cute.” She snatched the quill from his hand. “I’d assume you want blood for this?” She queried.

When Voldemort nodded, Hermione stabbed the quill into her hand, wincing in pain when she drew it out and signed her name on one of the spots and then handed it to Harry who did the same.

They were officially subordinates to Voldemort now. Both a thrilling and terrifying prospect for anybody with any sense.

Voldemort took the contract from them and held his hand out to each of them.

The thought of kissing someone’s hand as he seemed to be expecting of them seemed revolting to Harry, but he was passed that. He lowered his mask down to the dark wizards hand and found that it didn’t feel like the mask was even there which gave Harry the creeps.

“My Lord, I would like to ask of you one thing if I may.” Hermione was asking him. “The Baron and I need a location untrackable by Dumbledore. At the very least, somewhere we can keep our disguises between tasks.”

Voldemort turned his nose up at them. "You take up too much of my time as it is. I will grant you this last request. Bellatrix! Have Wormtail find a cave for these two and have him lay down some untrackable charms and make a re-usable portkey. Draco will deliver it to you both."

He looked down at them. "I am not here to cater to your every whim. If you want anything more than me, you had better prove you're worth the effort. You will be at the training exercises run over the upcoming holidays."

Harry wondered if he could escape Dumbledore's eyes for that length of time easily. It didn't matter, they'd stay in the cave that Wormtail was going to find for them.

Wormtail, there was someone near the top of Harry's hitlist as well. Once he had enough training, he would ask the Dark Lord to notify him when he had outlived his usefulness.

There was a lot of conflicting emotions with being an ally of the Death Eaters. Harry mused. So many people he wanted to kill from his own comrades. He decided that he wouldn't try killing them out of accidents as he knew they were slowly making Voldemort lose his patience.

"Don't worry my lord," Hermione told him. "We'll be there."

They took off the disguise and handed them to Bellatrix to have Wormtail put them in the cave along with the sword of Gryffindor. "Don't steal that sword Bellatrix, I intend to cut off Dumbledore's head with it."

She snorted. "Who would want this piece of crap?"

With that, they took hold of Draco's portkey and left back to Hogwarts.

They wasted no time on Draco's snide remarks as Hermione moved back to her dorm as quickly as she could muster.

Harry however stopped by the chamber of secrets to place the ashes of Fawkes. He did not trust phoenix ashes with Voldemort. He had no doubt that they would be very useful in a potion of some kind, but the ashes were Harry's reminder of Hedwig.

Harry had slept for two hours before the alarm was sounded and a very angry headmaster had every student up at 5am standing against the walls of the great hall.

Harry yawned. His rest had been more invigorating than he had expected. It gave him the mental awareness he needed to act surprised and appropriately outraged that Dumbledore's office had been broken into by Death Eaters and that someone had somehow kidnapped his prize phoenix, the school sorting hat, the sword of Gryffindor and destroyed a priceless antique.

One by one, Dumbledore moved through the students, using prior incantato to check their wands.

Harry wondered for a moment if using his wand to break the ward on the scales would show up. Technically he hadn't cast a spell; he'd just overfilled the ward until it became unstable.

When Dumbledore approached him he looked into Harry's eyes and assaulted him mentally once more with more power than Harry had ever had to bear.

Despite his shields holding, they bent under the pressure. He could sense Dumbledore's thought that said. "Was it you? I don't care if you're the chosen one, I will kill you if you did this!"

He roughly raised Harry's wand and cast the spell. Much to Harry's relief the image that displayed itself was the transfiguration he had cast much earlier the previous day.

Harry continued his act of innocence and watched the man move through the Gryffindors onto the Hufflepuffs. Thirty students past him, the Headmaster collapsed, rasping for breath.

Someone screamed and Madam Pomfrey rushed forward. "He's been poisoned!" She gasped. "Help me get him up to the hospital wing!"

"Children! Back to your dorms!" Professor McGonagall announced.

Harry stared in disbelief. He hadn't thought they'd catch the headmaster himself with the lemon drops.

It was bedlam as the students filed up to the dorms. Everybody was talking about who might have done it and why. Gryffindors in particular were rather fond of the headmaster.

'Gryffindors are all brave and courageous, but for all that, unable to see the truth in front of them.' He thought to himself. 'We'll be quite fortunate if he doesn't survive.'

"It's horrible isn't it?" Ginny said as she approached him. "Who would do such a thing? He is such a nice man."

'No he isn't.' Harry thought to himself. "I hope he'll be ok," He said while simultaneously thinking 'I hope he dies.'

"Are you alright?" Ginny asked. "If you want to talk, I'm here."

"I'm ok, just a little shaken up." Harry told her.

"I think we all are. Us Weasleys are having a hard time too. It seems that Percy hasn't turned up at work for the last week. Mum's starting to get pretty worried."

"I'm sorry." Harry replied, trying his best to sound sincere. "Look... I'm going to go to bed and think for a bit."

Ginny nodded.

“Madam Pomfrey has informed us that the Headmaster is out of immediate danger and has been moved to the intensive care unit at St. Mungos. He will be alright.” Professor McGonagall announced the following night.

Harry had planned to go up to the hospital wing to finish him off before breakfast only to find that it was guarded by no less than eighteen aurors. There was no way he could let off a spell without his aura flaring enough to be detectable.

He was sure that the news would reach the Dark Lord quite quickly. Perhaps he would finish the old man off before he became strong enough to fight again. He doubted that would be a smart idea however, as with eighteen aurors specifically for the hospital wing at Hogwarts, they'd have double that at St. Mungos.

He kept a scowl from appearing on his face.

“In the meantime, if you have any problems which would normally require the headmaster's attention, please come to me instead.”

The Christmas break loomed overhead. The last anybody had heard, Dumbledore was expected to be in the hospital for another two months as they worked the last of the poisons out of his system.

Hermione had been completely furious that he survived, wondering if she had somehow made a mistake in making the poison. Harry had comforted her by suggesting that perhaps Dumbledore was far too attached to his power to give it up that easily.

Despite Dumbledore being missing from the school for an extended length of time, the couple worked exceptionally hard to keep from relaxing or allowing their stories to change at all.

Their night time wanders down to the chamber continued unabated and remained unknown to the staff.

Harry had asked Hermione for advice about what to do with Ginerva Weasley as he really wasn't sure. Hermione had suggested that once he ran out of excuses for homework that he let her know he just wasn't ready for a relationship.

She admitted then that she was being constantly approached herself by Michael Corner which annoyed Harry. He pointed out to his girlfriend that Dumbledore was probably trying to drive a bigger wedge between them. Hermione however felt that it was genuine interest, but admitted that even if she weren't together with Harry, she wouldn't have even considered him.

With Dumbledore gone, Harry was able to focus a lot better on his schoolwork which helped him improve his grades, if only a little. If not for a small run-in with Draco towards the school holiday which was a ruse to deliver the two portkeys assigned to them, Harry would think life had improved.

The feeling was shortlived however, for as the Christmas holidays loomed closer to them, Hermione was confronted by Professor McGonagall about staying at the school over Christmas as her parents had been arrested.

Hermione had quite tartly refused, she was quoted as saying "I'll make my own decisions about my own life. As it so happens I intend to go and stay with an aunt."

Harry himself had decided he was going to move to Grimmauld place before going back to school after Christmas.

And so, he waited for the train's arrival at Kings Cross station. They were separated by a number of carriages and Harry was being forced to participate in conversations he wasn't even interested in.

When they disembarked, Harry made a beeline straight for Grimmauld Place.

They had planned it prior that Hermione would make her way invisibly to Harry's home and from there, they'd portkey to their cave to live in for a length of time.

With nobody in the house when Harry got home, he decided to drop off the Dark Arts books that he had been reading at school and pick out another few.

Hermione was a lot later than Harry had expected. She had recognised two order members, Mundungus Fletcher and Bill Weasley tailing her on the way to her aunt's place. It took her a long time to get far enough ahead to duck around a corner and disillusion herself so she could get away from them.

Harry had grabbed his set of books and the pot of ashes as soon as she finished her explanation so they could portkey over to their new residence for the holidays.

The cave was, just that. A cave. It went back about twenty metres into a mountain range. They assessed it together, finding that the only thing in the place was a single piece of rock which had been planed flat for use as a bed. The only things on the rock were their coats and masks, the sword of Gryffindor and a piece of paper that said "Training begins at 8am, here is your location" with a map of Norway.

There was no natural light in the cave which was to be expected. This cave was not part of the original negotiations and was no doubt the first cave Wormtail could find.

As Hermione worked over the unplotable charm with a much more effective fidelius for the cave, Harry did a few household chores including cushioning charms on the bed-stone, cutting holsters for enchanted lights into the walls and cutting a recess for the books that Hermione would no doubt procure while the cave was in use.

By the time that Hermione had finally finished casting the very complex charm, Harry had moved onto expanding the place to have a training room.

Harry wiped his brow.

“Wow, that’s a rather large area. For extra training?”

Harry turned to see Hermione in a nightdress. “Is it that late already?”

He couldn’t help but stare at her. If someone had told him when he was on the train to Hogwarts for the first time that the bushy haired, know-it-all Hermione Granger was going to one day be standing before him in nothing but her nightdress, smiling happily in a way that only he could, he wouldn’t have believed them. Nor would he have understood exactly what it meant back then either.

“Like what you see Baron Black?” She asked him with an amused grin.

Harry snapped out of his reverie and coughed. “Yes, well... I’m thinking another couple of metres in the back might do.”

“Don’t punch a wall in the back of the mountain.” Hermione joked.

“I’m pretty sure there’s a fair distance further before I’d do that...” Harry replied, shaking his head. “I suppose we should get some sleep, who knows what we’re up against tomorrow.”

When Harry was back into the main chamber, Harry found that Hermione had managed to solidify a bit of the rubble that Harry had dug up into a second bed and had transfigured some clothes into sheets they could use.

When they had both gotten into bed, they talked about inconsequential things like their current arrangements were like camping and how Harry decided he would go and get something to eat before they trained and eventually fell asleep.

Harry rose at six in the morning and immediately threw on some clothes and scouted the area outside. It did not take him too long to

realise that there were a few reindeer around the mountains. Harry learned that he was going to need to be a lot quieter when tracking them if he were to make a kill easily.

He fluked his first reindeer by firing off random shots once it had run and one shot managed to hit it on the hind leg severing it completely.

Harry was quite proud of himself as he levitated the animal corpse back to the cave where he used the sword he had procured to gut and prepare the meat for cooking with the help of Hermione's vast repository of knowledge.

At half past seven, they put on their cloaks and masks for the second time. Today would be their first day to make a good impression and make use of the training that the Dark Lord was providing them.

They each placed their hands on the coin that he had provided them with and felt a familiar tug at their navels.

When they arrived, they could see they were in a meadow with a variety of animals in a pen ahead of them and forest all around.

"Ah, the Dark Lord told me that you two would be unmistakable." A stereotypical Death Eater approached them in black garb, much better condition than their own, plus the standard skull mask. "I'm the training instructor assigned to you both. I hope you're worth my time as I take a lot of pride in the Death Eaters I turn out."

The man took his mask off and showed his scarred, once handsome face. "They call me The Silent Knight, but for now, you can call me Knight."

Neither of them returned the favour of showing their faces, but introduced each other as politely as they could.

"Not much for curtesy are you?" The man asked them.

"While our dress may be distinguishing, we have a lot to lose by showing our faces to people that cannot be trusted."

The man sneered. "I guess we'll never see your faces around here then.

"I'm told you're self-taught, so how often will I have to use the imperious on you to get you to kill those cows?" He gestured to a set of animals in a field.

Hermione flicked her wand level with her shoulder and a stream of yellow light streamed across the field.

Knight whistled as the top half of a cow slid off its legs and crumpled to the floor.

"Would you like me to give a better demonstration on a person instead?"

The Knight whistled. "That's a nice cutting curse. Wordless magic of decent power. Looks like we can skip a few months of training then. I don't suppose either of you are capable of wandless magic?"

"No." Harry lied. "But we have tried."

"Shame... We need more wandless users." He sniffed, disapproving. "Parkinson! Get your arse over here."

Pug-faced Pansy Parkinson approached the instructor and visibly shivered.

"Duel with the Baroness."

"Duel with a dementor sir?"

Hermione knocked the girl back a few feet with a weakly powered *tergum compello*.

Pansy yelped and switched to the defensive. She lasted for 30 seconds against the ferocity of Hermione's brutal onslaught when her

shield crumbled and she was hit by a bone-crusher to her upper-right arm.

“That was disgraceful Pansy!” Pansy’s trainer barked. “If you want to be one of his elite you’ll have to do a LOT better than that.”

“Perhaps I should have you both duel each other to get a feel for your abilities.”

The Barons stared with traditional duelling manners, 10 paces, turn and fire. Hermione again started on a very quick round of seemingly random spells which were specifically selected to break Harry’s shield.

It was a tactic that Harry hadn’t actually caught on with, but was fast enough with his spells to completely drop his shield, fire off a couple of shots and raise it again, rendering her strategy ineffective against the constant renewal.

When Hermione realised this, she switched to a more careful shielding tactic. After an hour, Knight called it a draw.

“Impressive speed, magical strength and stamina. Baron, your accuracy is crap. Your stances are full of holes which neither of you are exploiting and you both rely entirely too much on your wands. You’ve also become too familiar with each other. You need to learn how to handle unpredictable opponents can be.

“Let’s see how you do as a team against... Flint! Malfoy! Here!”

Draco grinned evilly as he approached the couple. “The mudblood baroness thinks she can win in a duel against me? There’s different rules here Barons. You’re about to learn them very painfully.”

By the time that Harry and Hermione returned to their cave that night, they learned one thing above all else. Their skills as fighters were very much honed towards each other. They had not lost to Flint and Malfoy, but they hadn’t walked away undamaged.

Not only that but although they knew each other's most common tactics, they were unable to synchronise with each other to effectively launch an attack.

Not that it stopped Hermione from building herself a shelf to put her finger collection. Draco had been sporting so many cuts, bruises and broken bones that he hadn't even realise that the Baroness had collected his finger, despite Draco's taunts to say she couldn't.

Harry chuckled to himself at hearing Hermione humming happily while perfecting the rear corners shelf.

The Silent Knight, second best assassin of the Dark Lord watched over the teenagers brawling.

He didn't even turn to see who was approaching him from behind. Dark Lord Voldemort's Aura had a feel of it's own that he could recognise from fifty metres away.

"Well?" He asked.

"I'll be honest with you my lord. Half of them are useful as cannon fodder. The Malfoy kid is good, but too cocky."

"And what of my two young protégés?" He asked, spotting them both sitting down.

"Vicious." The man replied. "God know where they get their spells from, nobody has been willing to duel them for the last two days since the Baron cast a charm that ripped one of the Durmstrang kid's skin off; third fatality in two weeks. Plus it seems the female one has a collection of twenty fingers so far since Malfoy suggested she was a mudblood."

"So they're cruel. It makes them perfect in sentiment, but how are their skills."

“Well, they came with wordless magic. They told me they’ve tried for wandless but aren’t able to. Having said that, they can duel for three hours without breaking a sweat and the level of magic they use isn’t kids stuff. I get the impression they’ve either been using that kind of magic for a long time or they’re used to playing with much higher powered stuff.”

“Interesting.” Voldemort replied.

“I’ve gotten them working very well together now. They’ll make a good assassination team as you wanted, when they want to be hidden, not even I can find them.”

“Summon them to me.”

The man nodded and whistled ear-piercingly. “Blacks! Front and centre!”

Harry was brought out of his meditation by the sound and on seeing the Dark Lord’s presence, gently brought Hermione out of her trance.

“He wants us.”

They joined their trainer at the crest of the hill.

“I have a job for you both.”

“As you wish.” They both replied.

“You are to bring me the head of Augusta Longbottom.” The dark lord pulled a scroll out of his robes and handed it to them. “I had this collected, make good use of it.”

“We’ll need a portkey.” They replied.

Voldemort grumbled. “Knight, see about having them trained in apparating and remove the tracking on them.”

“I’ll be expecting you tonight. Knight will bring you before me.”

Voldemort disappeared with a crack.

“Take the rest of the day off to go over that material.” Knight told them. “You’ll start at 9pm tonight, be here half an hour before then.”

Harry left his girlfriend in study mode while he had bathed in the oversized bathtub they’d installed.

It would have looked very odd to see a 17 year old boy floating bubbles of water, a metre in diameter up to a cave to put in a rock bathtub.

The cave had evolved a lot in the two weeks they were there, With the help of some powerful and some well focused magic, they’d managed to change the cave from a dingy caveman’s abode to a much more comfortable area with a large library space (with a whole seventeen books), adjacent study area, duelling hall and made a new bedroom with a divider between them.

It was cosy with just the two of them as they spent their nights discussing new spells or Hermione making up her own which was something that Harry dearly loved to watch.

Yet, their relationship had not moved forward from friendly embraces and chaste kisses. For all the changes that had occurred in their lives since Dumbledore’s identity came to the surface, they were too scared of destroying what they had.

Harry stepped into the study where Hermione was making notes.

“Everything alright?”

“ It’s a training run Harry, Augusta Longbottom is a wealthy pureblood witch, but she had no political stance except that she’s against the Dark Lord.

“The report here says that she is suspected in transferring funds to the Order of the Phoenix. That is why we’re hitting her.”

Harry nodded. “Neville said that he’s staying at Hogwarts this year, so we shouldn’t have to kill him too. I can kill people I don’t care for, but I don’t think I’m emotionally ready to take the life of an old friend, even if he isn’t who he used to be.”

Hermione gave him a sympathetic look. “Harry, Voldemort only wanted us to kill Augusta, there’s no reason why we should kill anybody else in the house.”

Harry nodded.

“Besides, there was a reason deep down why we said we wouldn’t take the Death Eater garb wasn’t there?”

“I guess I just didn’t like what it stood for.”

“Well we sure as hell weren’t going to apparate into the Longbottom mansion to kill someone without some kind of a disguise were we? That would just prove that the Daily Prophet was right and that you do have a screw loose.” She smiled simply. “Going in there as ourselves, it would look to anybody under Dumbledore’s thumb that we’ve lost it. It’s going to be rather ironic if it comes out that we are the Barons Black.”

Harry laughed. “You know that I wouldn’t have even considered that. I’m not entirely comfortable with the image that we’re projecting, but it’s better than sitting back and pretending like everything is okay.”

“We’ll make sure that nobody says our codename lightly.”

Harry grinned. “Great, so we become You-Know-Who-Two and You-Know-Who-Three.”

Hermione playfully slapped him. “You prat!”

She sighed. "They probably will won't they? It will probably seem to them that we've gone dark."

Harry lost his smile and sadly shook his head. "We went dark the minute we tried casting a spell from that book."

"But we're doing it for the right reasons aren't we? We need Voldemort's help to take Dumbledore down!"

Harry sighed. "Well, I think we are, but there will be a lot of people out there who won't. We're killing innocent people as a way of getting to him."

"That's the thing Harry." Hermione told him. "Dumbledore threatened to use Luna to kill me! Luna! I have no doubt that he'd do it either, One obliviate and the man makes you a murderer, another obliviate and she's back to normal, a few more on top of that and nobody is aware you even existed!"

"So you're saying we should kill them on the off chance they have murdered in the past?"

"Harry, what I'm saying is that we're not killing people as such, we're removing the strings from puppets. Dumbledore can't control puppets with no strings. They're free."

Harry nodded. He could understand where Hermione was coming from, and it did make sense, he knew for a fact that when you died, you lived on elsewhere. It had to be a better life than not knowing who you really were.

"Then... when we get a chance... we should kill Neville too, and his parents... I hope that if we do that, they'll get their sanity back and Neville and Augusta can have them back."

Hermione smiled. "That's really sweet of you Harry. We'll do that."

"So, show me how we're going to do this." Harry said leaning over to look at the map.

The Barons black portkeyed to the grounds around the Longbottom Mansion and Hermione disillusioned herself immediately to start placing the anti-apparation ward which involved her going for a hike all the way around the sandstone walls, pouring out magic as she moved.

When she finally reached Harry again, she pulled out her wand and etched some runes into the air above the slightly glowing line. When she was done, she waved her arms in the familiar arc that he had witnessed in the graveyard the night they killed Percy and Igor.

Harry chuckled to which Hermione raised an eyebrow.

“I never realised you were just activating the wards that the Dark Lord already had in place.”

Hermione smirked. “In the event of a fight, he wouldn’t have wanted us apparating away if we knew how to. Come on.”

They disillusioned themselves and skirted the wall and passed through the gate to the house.

The Longbottom Mansion itself was the same sandstone as the walls and seemed to be made of many cylindrical rooms joined together. The only square object to be found around the place was a greenhouse which was just visible from where they were walking up the large driveway.

Harry found it rather odd that a wizarding home should have a stone path driveway wide enough for a car given that they had probably never even had a car in the driveway in the history of the home.

They approached the front door and Hermione quietly cast Alohamora on the door.

As they slipped inside, it occurred to Harry exactly how cumbersome it was to be truly invisible as he could neither tell where Hermione was, nor could she know where he was.

Harry saw a flicker of an aura, enough for him to grab Hermione's outstretched hand as she lead him up the stairs.

Augusta Longbottom spent Thursday nights in the study reading a novel which worked out well for them as they stepped into the study and closed the door.

The elderly Augusta Longbottom looked up from her book. "Neville? Is that you? You know I don't like the door closed!"

'Neville is here?' Harry wondered.

Hermione removed her disillusionment charm, revealing her dementor like gaze upon the lady.

"Oh Merlin!" The oldest Longbottom exclaimed as Harry appeared beside her.

She fumbled for her wand beside her, but Hermione had already cast a frozen-heart curse which cooled her blood and stopped the heart from being able to beat.

The lady clenched her chest as Harry severed her head from her body.

"Was that really necessary?" The Baroness asked her.

"He asked us to bring back her head."

The door swung open and the pair swung around to see Neville staring at them. "Dementors!" He raised his wand. "Expecto—" Neville caught sight of his grandmother's head on the floor beside her arm chair. "Expecto— Expe— Expect—" He spluttered, unable to maintain a happy thought in his head for a brief moment.

His eyes flashed and his head snapped towards the would-be dementors. "Expecto Patronum!" An eagle flew from his wand towards the Barons Black.

"finite" Neville stared as his first corporeal patronus disappeared.

"Join your grandmother and be free." Harry told him as he fired an ethereal stake through his room-mate's neck.

Harry turned his head as Neville fell to the head. Nobody could see the tears that leaked from his eyes behind his mask.

Hermione put her hand on his shoulder. "Come on Harry, he's free now. Let's leave the bodies outside."

Harry nodded. "How about we leave Neville in the greenhouse. I think he'd appreciate that."

It was nine fifty when the Longbottom house collapsed to the ground with the much feared mormordre floating above the rubble and the Barons Black portkeyed away from the scene.

"I have seen little to suggest that you are actively doing anything at all. You ask us to join you, but we cannot see that there is benefit in joining you. It is easy for you to say that you'll promise us free reign to feed as we wish, but in what way are you moving to take down the Ministry or the venerable Chief Warlock Dumbledore?"

"Dumbledore will soon be dust." Voldemort replied. "I have two assassins—"

There was a bang on the door and it opened to show The Silent Knight enter. "Pardon my lord, but you asked me to bring the Barons Black to see you immediately."

"Speak of the devils." The Dark Lord said. "Show them in."

The Baron and Baroness going by the name of Black entered the room, carrying a serving tray between them. "We took the liberty of bring you some tea my lord." Hermione's voice rang.

The vampires stared at the tray between them, housing a teapot, tea cup, sugar, milk and the head of Augusta Longbottom.

Even the Death Eaters present bar Bellatrix Lestrange looked a bit off colour at the sight as the tray was taken to the head of the table and placed in front of Voldemort.

"Milk and sugar my lord?" The Baron asked.

Voldemort laughed, his voice rang through the hall. "Milk, no sugar." He replied.

Harry made the tea and wondered for a moment if he was going a bit over the top with the whole 'Bring me her head' thing. But then he looked at Lucius staring at him as if he had grown a second third arm.

"Aren't they adorable!" Bellatrix said, breaking the silence as Harry put the cup in front of her lord.

Voldemort beckoned Hermione closer and whispered into her ear.

She disappeared from view.

"There is no lack of resolve in these two. They will kill anybody I set them to, including ministry officials."

There was a strangled scream at the far end of the table and one of the vampires collapsed with a large wooden spike protruding from his back.

"You may both go now. I am pleased."

The Barons bowed and left the Dark Lord's presence.

Author's Notes:

I'll apologise for the long update time. I started university again and life will be hectic until I settle into a proper schedule again. I'll try not to make the updates weekly or later.

I've had a number of very generous reviews. You guys have given me a drive to make sure that I put a bit more effort into making the storyline as good as I can. (This was going to be a quick story with no real storyline, but it kind of evolved since then)

Morty M pointed out that Harry and Hermione were a little too OOC (Out of Character) when torturing at Voldemort's request. I have to admit, I agree wholeheartedly, but I will hopefully make their actions seem a little less abnormal when I start describing Dark Arts in detail. Still, I'll strive further to make them as in-character as I can.

Oh, and in case you're thinking, no... the sorting hat is not a horcrux.

--Steven

Omake 01 – “Will you go out with me?”

“Hey Harry,” A red-headed fifth year called to him as he entered the room.

“Ginny? Hey.”

“Umm... Harry, I was wonder if perhaps...”

‘If perhaps what?’

“Would you go out with me some time?”

Harry frowned. Ginny was annoying at the best of times, but for some reason, he couldn't bring himself to lie to her. Perhaps it was the veritaserum she'd slipped him at lunch.

“Ginny... I'm probably not the best person to go out with. I killed your brother Percy you see...”

Ginny looked horrified and started laughing. "That's a good one Harry! Cruel, but well thought out."

"I'm serious!" He insisted. "And Hermione killed Igor Karkaroff shortly after. I'm a very dark wizard now, so you really ought to stay away from me."

"Sure you are Harry," She grinned. "So will you go out with me?"

"... I'm also going out with Hermione now."

"What?" Ginny cried. "NOOOOOO!" She slapped him across the face. "I'll never forgive you Harry Potter!" She ran off with tears streaming through the air.

Harry felt the sting of his cheek and felt very confused.

Chapter 06 – Assassins

Harry sat down on his bed and put his hands to his eyes. He desperately wanted to cry for Neville, but the tears just would not fall.

“It’s okay my love.” Hermione said putting a hand on Harry’s shoulder. “I’m certain we did the right thing for him.”

“I really hope so Mione.” Harry replied sadly. “I really don’t know how I’m going to face the Gryffindors when school starts again.”

The Barons Black spent the last days of their holidays divided between learning how to apparate and being drilled on their techniques that they had covered since joining Voldemort.

On their last day, Knight pulled them aside to compliment them. “As students, you’re both astounding. I have never in my life seen anybody learn spells as fast as you both do.

“ You’re both creative and unpredictable. It requires a large encyclopaedia of spells to protect oneself from the both of you, plus there are a few spells that even I have never heard of.

“And then there is your handling of your mission. You must have been very eager to please the Dark Lord for that little stunt you pulled.” He told them both.

“He promised us much needed help. I cannot afford to lose favour with him as he would probably change his mind.” Hermione replied. “Your opinion of us makes me very happy though.”

“It pains me to think that I cannot keep up with either of you at times. I can never seem to figure out how you manage such complete invisibility.”

Harry smiled, showing a very faint outline on his mask. "Through a hundred years of meditation and study."

Knight tried to swat him with his hand, but Harry ducked. "You little whelp." He replied fondly.

"Apparently you're to return to Hogwarts on Monday. The Dark Lord has told me that I'm to continue your training at your cave, Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 2am. Give or take raids that is."

"At our cave?" Harry asked worriedly.

"Heh, Wormtail seems to have forgotten where it is though."

The Barons Black shared a look. 'Should we tell him?' They seemed to say.

Harry gave a reluctant nod. "It's not like he can tell anybody else where it is."

Hermione gave a thoughtful nod and whispered it into Knight's ear.

Knight grinned. "You two never cease to amaze me, a fidelius at your age? That works well for me, the Dark Lord has orders for you both to be given in confidence. There would be no place more secure than that."

"Orders?" Harry asked. "We'd better hear them then." He held out the portkey they used to get to their home. After all, there was no way for their trainer to apparate to the place without being able to know what it looked like.

The Knight waved to one of the other trainers down in the field. "I'm heading off for a bit!"

He took hold of the portkey and with a tug of the navel, they were gone.

Albus Dumbledore was not a happy man. It was still another month or so before he'd be able to move properly. The poison that had run through his body had all but paralysed him. They had said that if his Lemon Drops had absorbed another millilitre he would have surely died.

The fact that Fawkes was somehow dead or incapacitated suggested that somewhere, Harry Potter was involved, but the fact was that Harry Potter was incapable of casting the Dark Mark found in his office.

Dumbledore had made sure that the boy would stay to the light. He had used a very special artefact to ensure it.

Even Dumbledore had his doubts however as both Mr Potter and Ms Granger had once again gone missing and were completely untrackable.

He was certain that they were together, and for that, they would need to be punished.

"Albus." Someone called from the door. "Dumbledore turned his head and looked at Alastor Moody and Severus Snape who were standing just behind the doorway.

"How are you my old friend?" He asked.

"I'd be better if we weren't delivering bad news."

Dumbledore gestured to his Auror guards that he wanted some time in private.

"Well gentlemen, what do you have to tell me?"

"It would seem that the Dark Lord has a couple of new assassins." Severus informed him.

Dumbledore raised an eyebrow. "So then Severus, what is so important about these two assassins that you need to bring them to my attention?"

"They brought the head of Augusta Longbottom to the Dark Lord on a silver serving tray. One of them was able to kill a vampire without it even knowing she was behind it."

"She?"

"They're called the Barons Black. They are not Death Eaters as far as I can tell, they wear dementor cloaks and masks that have glowing red eyes. Their hands are young, but that's about all I know about their appearance."

"The Barons Black?" Dumbledore wondered. "What are the chances of it being Harry Potter and Hermione Granger?"

"Unless they've totally flipped, nil. The magical aura that the Barons black put out is large, extending thirty to fifty centimetres from their body. It's obvious to me that they've hit the limit for magical power. You know what Potter's is like.

"The voices don't match, but that's not a given identifier. But the thing that convinces me is their cruelty. I have heard from Lucius Malfoy that the Barons are the murderers of Igor Karkaroff and Percy Weasley. They used some very cruel techniques."

Snape finished his report and looked to Alastor.

"That's not all, it would seem that Mister Longbottom was at the Longbottom Manor when Augusta was killed, we found him with an ethereal stake through his throat in the greenhouse. He was dragged there after being killed however and then the house was utterly destroyed."

"How so?"

“Albus, there was nothing left of the place, just a huge crater in the ground. Despite no reports of a Death Eater raid, you would need fifteen wizards to remove a place from the earth the way they did.”

Dumbledore mused and muttered to himself for a moment. “I’d like to rule out the possibility that our missing children are not them, have the order kill Miss Granger on sight.”

Severus opened his mouth, stunned. “Kill Miss Granger? How could we perpetuate that without questioning—”

“Obliviate”

“Thank you Alastor,” Albus said to him. “We’ll remove her from the picture as soon as we see her. That should clear up the issue of whether the troublesome couple in question were involved with my office as well.”

“She should have been killed as soon as she was born Albus. You’ve known from the beginning that you were playing with fire keeping her alive.”

“Yes, you’ve told me that often old friend.”

Severus blinked his eyes a few times. Albus and Alastor looked at him. “Are you alright Severus, you’ve been spacing out.”

“It’s just a shock... Hermione Granger, killed Augusta Longbottom? I would never have believed her capable of it if you hadn’t shown me proof...”

“We’ll take care of her Albus.” Moody replied and walked out of the room.

“This is your home?” The Silent Knight spluttered. “I can’t believe that Wormtail would have given you such an amazing cave!”

“Pfft, Wormtail gave us just this front room here. There was only a single bed when we first came here. Everything else is extensions.”

Knight moved down the corridor and found the large space that made their training hall.

Two days earlier, Harry had an idea for some pillars to hide behind and so the room now sported ten pillars that if one looked up, you could still see the fingernails.

“That’s... an interesting use of engorgio...”

“Do you like?” Hermione asked him as she led him towards their study.

“I feel grateful that I’ve never taunted you with that name otherwise I’m sure my finger would be here somewhere.”

The Blacks sat down at one end of the table, Knight on the other. “So, the new mission.”

Knight pulled a sheet of paper out of his robes and slid it across the table.

“I can’t do some of these people. Remus Lupin, Arthur Weasley, Minerva McGonagall. I still respect many of those people as friends.”

“An assassination order on every member of the Order?” Hermione asked. “Where did you get this information?”

“An inside man.”

“Snape.” Harry replied venomously.

“You knew?”

Harry waved the question off. “It doesn’t matter, we’re supposed to do it in this order are we?”

“Yes, we’re to lure them into a sense of security, while you’re taking out Madeye Moody and Hestia Jones, A team of raiders will be going after a random set of Aurors to give the impression we’re hunting Aurors, past and new.

“Bellatrix has instructions to kill a few more of the Order’s Aurors and I’ll be stretching my legs a little too.

“Once we’ve removed the Order’s teeth, we’ll see about taking on the more harmless ones, but if you say you won’t do a few of them, we’ll have to see about swapping a few around.”

They talked a little further as to the organisation of the assassinations, dates and places.

Hermione had wanted to do her own research for the assassinations, but as the Knight pointed out, they had to put on a front at Hogwarts. It was far better to have someone looking into it fulltime.

Knight gave them a few pointers, the biggest one was to ensure they realised that Moody was given to them first because he was a pushover compared to Hestia Jones who was a professional hit-witch. She was not the best, but she was far from the worst.

He disapproved of the Barons being given a hit-witch, but the dark lord had insisted upon it. “As a test...” was his comment.

They had two weeks to prepare before the plan would be put into motion. They were to hit both of the aurors in one night. Harry didn’t like the timing; there was too much that could go wrong with one hit, let alone two. But Knight has insisted that it needed to look like a blitzkrieg against the aurors. Doing it over two nights would give them the opportunity to fortify themselves.

Reluctantly, Harry accepted the mission, as did his pseudo-wife.

“So, tell me something.” Knight asked. “Why are there not any little blacks running around this place?”

If he could have seen the look behind their masks, he would have found cheeks that matched the colour of the mask's eyes.

Harry awoke with a start. He was in his favourite armchair. The feeling was reminiscent of waking up after being obliterated.

"Yay! Dad's awake!" A little mop of black hair called and climbed up on his chair to bounce on his lap.

"James. Don't do that. Get down!" Harry grouched.

A bushy haired brunette dragged a small book in front of him. "Daddy, can you read me my book?"

"In a little bit, let me get something to eat first. He said as he rose from his chair." Twelve children, all with the traits of their mother and father. Harry smiled in love for both them and their mother.

"Where's mum kids?"

"In the kitchen dear!" She called.

Harry grinned and strode purposefully into the kitchen.

His wife was pregnant with his thirteenth child. He didn't know he wanted a large family, but now that he had it, it seemed so right, so perfect.

His eyes moved from her rounded belly to her face, her bright brown eyes and her vibrant red hair.

"Ginny?"

"Is something the matter dear? You sound shocked."

"But... The kids..."

“What about them? Did Sirius do something again?”

“But they're Hermione's kids, aren't they?”

“Don't start this again Harry love, Hermione died years ago. Every one of those beautiful children are yours and mine. I think I ought to remember, you put me through a lot of pain with each one.” She chided while smiling.

Harry couldn't believe his ears.

“Hermione? Dead? I don't understand.”

“Yes dear. Why do you get like this every now and then? You'll be fine for a few months and then you'll forget all about me. It's starting to get quite hard to cope with Harry. I wish you'd just forget about her.”

Harry shook his head. “No! They've got to be her kids! They've all got her hair, and they like books so much and they don't have the Weasley temper! They've got to be hers!”

Harry thought about what must have happened. Twelve kids running around the lounge room, all of them looked like a piece of Hermione.

“Dumbledore obliviated you and put you in her place didn't he?” He fumed quietly. “Didn't he!”

“Harry stop it! Stop it! Don't say things like that! Hermione was killed in my fifth year, strangled by Loony Lovegood. You remember that don't you?”

“What?” Harry demanded as he stumbled back. “No...” He couldn't believe that was what happened. “No! You're lying!”

“I'm not lying Harry, why won't you ever believe me!”

“Because it’s impossible! I refuse to believe you!” He shouted.
“Arag--”

“--gggghhhhh!” Harry sat up straight in his bed.

He had been back to Hogwarts for three days. He seemed to have a different nightmare every night. The same theme, but different situations.

“Harry!” Ron was shouting. “You alright dude? You were having a nightmare. Was it Neville again?”

Harry looked at him, still in shock. “What? Oh, um, yes. Yeah, just... Go back to sleep Ron... I don't think I can sleep any more tonight.”

Ron nodded, laid back on his bed and fell asleep faster than you could say “Draco is missing a finger.”

Things were starting to get heavy in their classes and the only thing that made Harry smile were the nights he'd spent with Hermione and the looks Malfoy gave him whenever he caught Harry staring at the space where aforementioned finger used to be.

Harry set up his charms and reached for the marauder's map. Harry's eyes wandered over to the Ravenclaw tower where Hermione was in the common room.

She was alive and well. He blinked for a moment and noticed that Luna had started to move.

“Mischief managed.” He muttered urgently and dumped the map in his trunk, locking it securely.

Harry disillusioned himself and immediately ran towards the Ravenclaw tower.

“Unicorn Tail!” He said urgently to the portrait, who looked rather confused and startled, but opened nevertheless.

He saw Luna speaking to Hermione.

“Everybody knows that you killed Neville.” She was saying. “And a little voice told me that I should be the one to make you atone for what you've done.”

“I don't know what you're talking about.” Hermione replied.

Harry saw a glint from behind Luna's back.

'That's a knife!' A voice screamed in his head.

Harry looked around the room. No Dumbledore around.

He snuck up on Luna and used expelleramus on the knife.

Luna blinked a couple of times and turned to look at the knife. “Huh? There is a knife on the floor. That’s rather dangerous.” She muttered to herself as she picked it up. As she stood up, Hermione levelled her wand at Luna. “Oh dear... It would appear that someone has made me forget again.”

Hermione blinked a couple of times. “Sorry?”

“It happens occasionally. The doctors said I’m a bit slow at creating memories you see.” She explained. “I seem to have two memories of this afternoon. In one, I was looking for bark-fingered waldernuts and in the one I just remembered, I was asked to meet someone.

“Come to think of it, I have distinct memories of you being in Gryffindor.”

Hermione’s lip trembled. “I- I was. For five years.”

"I see." Luna gazed as she picked up the knife and placed it on the study table. "If you can tell me that, obviously you remember what nobody else can."

"Dumbledore cannot obliviate me." She replied. "Or Harry either for that matter."

"You have to show me how!" Luna asked animatedly. "I would like very much to keep my own memories."

Hermione tried to smile. She felt horrible for someone who knew they were being obliviated, but was unable to stop it from happening.

"I'm sorry." She replied. "It just happened. But I'll look into it for you. If there is a way to prevent it, I'll find it."

Harry was getting mad. With Hermione's attempted murder it became apparent to him that Dumbledore had seen fit to punish him. Whether or not the old man had managed to figure anything out remained to be seen, but it did not change the fact that Hermione was forced to put alarms on her bed whenever she slept and she had been becoming increasingly paranoid.

After two weeks, Hermione had been unsuccessful at finding a way to reject the effect of an obliviation. Before school had started again, she had spent long hours in Grimmauld place trying to find what went wrong with themselves, but had turned up a blank then too.

Harry had noticed a change in Hermione's mood. He felt that she was slowly starting to become depressed. He assumed that it was on account of her parents, but when he asked her, she just shook her head violently, insisting that nothing was wrong.

They spent every moment they could afford going over the plans they kept in their cave. If everything went well, they would be done in an hour.

Harry sighed and leaned back in his chair. Hermione was scribbling notes on a piece of paper. He assumed that she was working on a spell, but his mind was whirling with 'what if' scenarios to watch her write.

“Do you think I'm ugly?” She asked suddenly, not looking up from the papers.

'Where did that come from?' Harry asked himself. “No! I've never once lied to you when I said that I think you're beautiful.”

“We've been together for months Harry, but we've never done anything more than kissing and cuddling.”

'more?' Harry thought blankly, his mind struggling to follow one of the scenarios of the assassination going wrong.

Hermione looked up and spoke angrily. “You've never shown any interest in me more than that, we've never made love, you've never really touched me. Merlin Harry, we haven't even discussed the future!”

Harry blushed Weasley red. “To be honest, I've been so focussed on now that I haven't thought much about the future.

“It's not that I don't love you or I think you're ugly, but I'm really scared of destroying what we have.”

“Are you afraid that I'd turn you away if you tried to be more intimate.” She was exasperated. “Are you a moron Harry Potter?”

Harry gaped at her for a moment and then she sighed.

“I'm sorry Harry, I didn't mean to yell at you, but right now, I just feel like we're going nowhere as a couple!”

Harry nodded. “I'd like to have a future with you too...”

“... I don't just want a future with you Harry, I want a now with you too!” Hermione exclaimed.

Harry dropped his head, feeling ashamed of himself.

“I'm not asking you to make love to me, but I just want to know that we're not at a dead end Harry.” Hermione was pleading.

Harry dared to look up at her, her eyes were shimmering with tears that had yet to fall.

“I- I wanted to wait until we were married.” Harry reached for his notes in front of them and started shuffling them. “I do really want to be with you Hermione, and I would like to Marry you, but I really want to ask your parents first.”

Hermione smiled sadly. “I hope that the Dark Lord gets to our request sooner than later then.”

Harry wondered if he was reading between the lines correctly with her last statement.

Hermione sniffed. “We should put on a good show for him don't you think?”

He grinned in response.

Doing an assassination of Mad-eye Moody was not an easy task. He was at home, as he should be at 2 in the morning.

The problem was not killing him as such, it was his foe glasses and other dark detectors. In order to avoid triggering them prematurely, Hermione had calculated that they had to create an anti-apparition field so large that it encompassed a five house radius.

This still would not stop them from triggering off as, as they found out once Harry had broken into the old man's front door.

The door opened and sirens blasted through the house. Harry hoped that being invisible would help him escape from Moody's eye.

The first thing that Hermione did was remove the flu-powder while Harry stalked into Moody's bedroom.

Moody was sleeping through his alarms, which was Harry's first sign that something was wrong.

He warily sent a diffindo towards the sleeping figure. When the curse hit, the figure melted away into a fine mist.

'Shit!' He thought to himself as a fist connected with his head. Harry smacked into the wall and struggled to keep himself upright.

"So, Voldemort sent the Barons Black after me did he?" Moody asked him, cancelling Harry's disillusionment charm.

Harry raised his wand, but Moody already had an expelleramus coming towards him, his wand bounced off the floor and rolled under the bed.

Moody tsked and flicked his wand, sticking Harry to the bedroom wall and promptly left to attack the Baroness.

Harry wandlessly removed his bindings and retrieved his wand.

He strode into the lounge room where the lightshow was being held and fired a couple of stunners at Moody who dodged each of them.

"It seems I underestimated you." He grumbled.

"Accio Wand!" Harry called while wordlessly casting a cross-eyed charm.

Mad-eye didn't even move but evenly looked at Harry, his magical eye no longer spinning.

He didn't have the chance to undo the spell as he had to defend himself from oncoming spells from Hermione.

Madeye fired a spell at Hermione which connected.

Harry knew better than to turn and see if she was alright and continued to fight.

He heard a clank as Hermione's mask fell to the ground.

He turned to look at her face.

Moody stared at her, grinning. "I thought so." He growled. "I had hoped that the Lovegood girl would have killed you off, but as you are the Baroness, I wouldn't be surprised if she was no longer alive."

"You tried to kill her?" Harry asked.

"Albus gave the word to all the Order members. She has two weeks before the order start hunting her down. Harry... Potter."

Harry raised his wand. "You had better be lying or the Magical Law Enforcement is going to find your body smeared from one end of the street to the other." He said with slitted eyes.

"Everybody you know and love is going to come after and kill your muggleborn friend. She should have been killed the moment she was born." Moody replied.

Hermione started throwing even nastier spells, with Harry joining in a split second later.

Harry felt a curse slice through his left bicep and in his distraction, his wand went flying straight into Moody's hand.

Harry blinked and a second later, Hermione's wand joined his.

“You're too young to battle with me and win kids.” He told them disgustedly. “I really couldn't care less if you joined Voldemort as long as you kill him.” He said to Harry. “However, she has to go.”

Harry and Hermione simultaneously let go of their magic, blinding Moody who instinctively put up a shield.

Harry's disembowelment charm cracked the shield enough for Hermione's curse to get through.

Moody stared at them for a brief moment in disbelief.

His body started twitching and a second later, he was flailing uncontrollably. It was a couple of minutes before he collapsed to the ground.

“What was that?” Harry asked her.

“It causes extreme degeneration of the spine.” Hermione replied. “Technically he's still alive and can hear and see us. He can't speak of course because by now, he can't cause his lungs to work which gives him about 3 minutes before he starts suffering permanent brain damage.”

She leaned down next to him. “Albus Dumbledore has made a huge mistake, as have you.” She whispered to him before using the Avada Kedavra on him to make sure nobody would get to him alive.

Hermione's hands were shaking. “The order wants to kill me Baron.”

“It will be alright. We'll kill anybody who thinks lightly of us. Why don't you bring down the house, I'm going to make good on my promise.”

Hermione nodded without saying a word as Harry used his wand to drag Moody out into the street where he repeated his disembowelment charm and flung him down the street.

Hermione exited the house a few moments later clutching some books Harry assumed were from Moody's bookshelf.

With a loosely aimed destruction spell and a morsmordre, the Barons Black fled the crator of a house and after Hermione dropped off her books, apparated to Hestia Jones' home.

Hestia Jones was waiting in her library with her wand drawn. She noticed the moment that the apparition wards were up that her hunter was drawing close.

Sitting on her table was a teacup, with tea leaves arranged at the bottom of the cup; a picture of the falcon. She had seen the image a few times in her career as a hitwitch. But there was a feeling about tonight. A feeling that perhaps, if she'd had a second cup, it might have shown the grim.

She tapped herself on the head with her wand and disillusioned herself. It would make her harder to aim at until she fired off a shot.

Her door moved slightly and she ducked down.

She had chosen this room for a specific reason, which proved that she had been right in doing so as she fired an anti-disillusionment charm at one of the indents in the carpet and quickly rolled away before they could get in a shot.

She felt a tug at her wand. 'They're trying to summon it.' She mused, but she had a firm grip on her wand. She could hold onto it even if someone hit it directly with an expelleramus.

She poked her head out from around the bookshelf she was behind. Two figures, one invisible with no aura, the other was a dementor like figure. She knew at first glance that it wasn't as a dementor wouldn't be holding a wand and dementors didn't have glowing eyes.

The books next to her flew off the shelf as a spell blasted through the back of it.

‘Shit, they can see auras too!’ She mused to herself.

She saw a footprint in the carpet to her left and before she could react, her wand hand dropped to the ground.

She screamed in pain, clutching the limb where it had been severed. Her eyes flashed and she unleashed a wave of wandless magic at her perpetrator.

Hermione was surprised that she was capable of it, but then again, she reasoned, it would be reasonable to assume that most hit-wizards and witches were capable of it.

She rose her wand, but Hestia had unleashed another spell which slammed into the Baroness, pushing her back into a bookcase.

Hermione had the wind knocked out of her and she fell to the ground coughing and trying to ignore the pain that flashed across her back from the shelf she’d landed across.

The auror summoned the offending wand and used a congealing spell on her stump to stop the excessive bleeding and spun around to come face to face with the other cloaked figure.

Harry let loose a bludgeoning spell which Hestia dodged, ducking quickly.

He saw her raise her left hand and a puff of smoke appeared from her hand. There was no flash of light coming towards him, just a puff and he felt as if his face had exploded.

The masked figure flew back, pieces of his enchanted porcelain mask dropping to the ground. Hestia approached him, summoning his wand. Despite the enhanced shadows over the face, there was no way she could mistake the scar on the boy’s forehead.

She gasped. “H... Harry Potter!”

In her amazed stupor, she failed to hear her window shattering as she was hit by a hex to her right leg.

Her leg buckled and she dropped to one knee. The second robed figure, obviously a female from her view stepped before her, raised her hand and uttered "Accio Teeth". Hestia was propelled forward as her teeth flew from her mouth into the Baroness' hand.

'What a powerful accio' She thought to herself as she pushed herself up.

"percutio." Hermione held out the teeth in her open hand.

Hestia Jones did not have a moment to think as her own teeth, propelled towards her at the speed of sound shot through her head leaving tooth sized holes littered through her head and upper body.

The hit-witch fell to the ground, dead.

The Silent Knight moved forward and held out his hand to Harry. "Come on Baron, let's finish this job and get the hell out of here."

Harry smiled painfully as he pushed himself up off the wall. He had a head injury which had left a slight bloodstain on the wall, but apart from a splitting headache, he knew he'd live.

As Harry moved forward, he held out his hand and wandlessly repaired his face mask and put it on.

"Hermione, see if she has any books worth grabbing, I'll deposit her body where they'll find it."

Hermione nodded, unfazed by the fact that they'd dropped their pseudonyms. It was obvious that the Silent Knight knew who Harry was by the way he'd looked at him.

"Callo Portus," Harry muttered as he levitated the body out the front of the house.

“So you kids usually rummage through a library before leaving?” Knight asked as he peered out the window cautiously.

Hermione picked a book off the shelf. She didn't bother to look at the insides, just grabbed whatever sounded interesting from the title.

“Whatever will give us a better edge. We're obviously not quite good enough to take on a hit-witch without help.” She replied bitterly from the shelves.

Knight looked at the shelves. “Hey, Dune, I've always wanted to read that.” He said as he pocketed the book.

Hermione shook her head as she took another book from the shelf and exited the room with her teacher following after her.

When they got outside, Knight raised his wand. “Morsmordre!”

Hermione held out her hand and used their trademark obliterating spell which levelled the house and with Hestia's Body hanging from a tree, they left the area for their cave once more, relieved to have gotten out of the conflict with the few wounds they had.

“Why the hell were you following us?” Hermione screamed at him, dragging her costume off and throwing it to the floor. “We didn't need your help!”

“Baroness, calm down.” Harry told her as he took off his own cloak and hung it on the hook.

“But Baron!” She replied. She looked at a large gash in his arm where moody had sliced him. “Oh, you're cut. Where are the bandages?” She grumbled as she started taking care of his wound.

Knight took off his mask and hood, revealing his dark brown hair which was a rare thing to see.

“The Dark Lord asked me to make sure you both came back alive.” He told them. “I could have stepped in a moment later, but once she saw who you were Baron, I automatically assumed you wanted to make sure she was dead.”

“Is it really better, the fact that you know who I am?” Harry replied, wincing as Hermione wrapped a bandage around his shoulder too tight. “My identity is nothing to flaunt around the Death Eaters.”

“And now I know why.” Knight replied. “It doesn’t matter to me who you are. You’re still the Barons Black to me, the most ruthless allies the dark lord has.” He turned to Hermione and grinned broadly. “I can’t believe you killed her with her own teeth.”

Hermione scowled in return. “I have bad dreams at night.” She replied, mildly surprising Harry; she’d never told him about them. “In those dreams, I see myself killing the man responsible for my parents these ways.”

Knight nodded. “I have similar dreams myself, but I’ve never brought myself to act upon them.”

“I can't sit idly by while my parents sit in jail for being Death Eaters! They're muggles!” Hermione yelled at him, yanking on the bandage once more.

“Yeowch!” Harry screamed.

“Muggle Death Eaters?” Knight choked on his laugh. “That's about the most absurd thing I've heard in years!”

Hermione waved her hand and the bandage stuck to itself.

“Thanks love.” Harry replied, smiling tenderly at her.

“We should probably go.” Hermione told him, effectively cutting the conversation short. “It would be best if we were seen to be in bed.”

“You're not going to report in?” Knight asked them.

“Tell the Dark Lord that we had some fun, thanks for the invitation and we'll be in touch soon.

“I think I'll put it a little differently than that, I don't fancy being at the receiving end of his crucio because of your sense of humour.” The older man mused.

Harry smiled at him and reached for their portkey to Hogwarts. “Thanks for your help tonight.”

“My pleasure, I couldn't let my star students get themselves killed now.” He replied.

The morning after could only be described as pandemonium.

Acting headmistress McGonagall already looked 30 years older (if that was even possible) before she even sat down for breakfast.

She had been up most of the night at Grimmauld Place picking up the pieces that had been left by the attack on the Ministry.

There was little information to be gathered from the houses of the sixty or so dead aurors. They had lost more than half of their force, including all of the aurors who were part of the Order of the Phoenix.

The loss of the order's aurors had caused a loss of morale in the vigilantes. Minerva was having a very hard time keeping things together in Albus' absence.

When the post arrived in the morning to all the kids, she braced herself once more as children started screaming. Some of them were realising that their parents had just been killed. Others were seeing the bigger picture and realising that the ministry was failing. The rest were either in shock, in Slytherin house or involved with the execution.

Harry played his place of silent shock well enough that nobody questioned him.

Ginny sat down next to him as he slowly ate, deep in thought. He was thinking deeply about Hermione's nightmares and how he could help her.

“Are you alright Harry?” She asked putting her hand on Harry's arm tenderly.

Harry was brought out of his thoughts and after looking at Ginny for a second, yanked his arm back violently.

“Harry...?” She asked.

“Sorry, I just...” He needed to get away from her. He was concerned that if anybody stared at him for long enough they'd see his real emotions. “... I need to go.”

“Harry, why won't you let me comfort you? You know that you can talk to me.” She said softly as he got up.

“Perhaps one day Ginny, but I've never been the kind to talk to others about my problems.” He said as he walked away.

“You'll feel better if you did!” She called.

Harry wished as he exited the hall that he had his broom that he could go flying, but given that nobody had seen fit to return it to him, he put his mind to studying instead and making sure that he wasn't falling too far behind in his classes.

Hermione would probably be quite happy with him doing work voluntarily, he thought to himself as he reached for his transfiguration textbook.

“Hey Harry,” Ron's voice interrupted his train of thought.

“Ron, what's up?” He asked his pseudo-friend.

“I wanted your advice on something.” He said nervously. “You know that bushy haired Ravenclaw? Hermione's her name.”

Harry stopped writing and gave Ron his attention. “I know her, the one with all the answers.”

“I'm thinking about asking her out.” Ron told him, to Harry's disbelief.

“Forget it!” Harry spat venomously then realised his mistake. “She's far too interested in academics for a boyfriend.”

“Oh,” Ron said, his face falling. “You think so?”

Harry nodded.

“Not that you're much better, every minute you're not asleep you're studying, you should take a break every now and then and get to know some girls.”

“Between school work and planning for the future, I barely have enough time to handle the advances of girls.” Harry replied. This was not a conversation he wanted to hold with Ron.

“I know that Ginny has had her eyes set on you for a while, you should give her a chance.”

‘ugh! As if she's using her brother to try and set us up!’ Harry picked up his quill again. “Maybe when we've had exams I'll consider it.”

Ron nodded. “I hope you're not planning on spending all your holidays studying.”

Harry shook his head. He was planning on spending the Christmas holidays becoming a wizard so powerful he could topple Dumbledore from his throne.

'Dumbledore...' He thought to himself as Ron turned and left. 'He'll be back here soon. I don't doubt that once he returns, he'll invite Hermione up to his office and I'll never see her again after that.'

Harry's heart skipped a couple of beats. He couldn't allow that to happen.

The bell ringing signalled the end of his study period. "Potions," He grumbled to himself. 'Snape as teacher, and Hermione off to one side.' He hated potions.

"Black." Knight was waiting in their cave when they arrived on the Tuesday, one of their days off.

Harry was rather surprised to see him there.

"I was hoping that you'd be here." He said gesturing to a stack of paper on their makeshift table.

"What's this?" Harry asked him as he started thumbing through the papers, one of which was a floor plan showing a great many rooms. "Wait... is this...?"

"Azkaban."

Hermione appeared and pulled out her wand as soon as she realised that there were more people present than just Harry.

"Baroness." Knight greeted. "You know that we really did some damage with the attack on the ministry. They've had to pull half of the aurors off of Azkaban in order to supplement the ones they lost. We're not going to find a better time than this."

"When?" Harry asked excitedly.

"Two weeks from today."

Harry ran and hugged Hermione, swinging her in the air. "We're going to get your parents back Hermione!"

Hermione smiled and released herself so that she could study the material given to them thoroughly.

Author's Note:

Ugh, I hate real life. Everyone has been really kind with their reviews. I'm glad that everybody seems to be liking it so far. I hope I haven't tarnished the story.

This is probably the fourth rewrite of this chapter, it's certainly better than the last few rewrites, but the next one should be a lot easier.

I was thinking to myself that I haven't done enough to move the relationship between H/Hr further so I went and added in their little 'argument' which I hope I haven't fudged completely.

--Steven

Chapter 07 - Azkaban Fortress

With the news that the Dark Lord was finally going to give them what they wanted, Harry and Hermione redoubled their efforts on training. Hermione had gotten stuck into the Auror training manual while Harry had chosen to start training with the Sword of Gryffindor.

Hermione had disapproved of his training regime. It would slow him down to carry the sword, even if it was reasonably light, and it was unsafe to carry around a sword with no sheath. While Harry agreed that he definitely needed to get a sheath, he pointed out that a sword, he could decapitate someone without needing to flair his aura. His girlfriend had mulled it over for a short moment and then agreed.

They poured over the maps trying to memorise the forty floor fortress. Azkaban was a very confusing place, with cells in the most unusual places. There were cells in the middle of walkways that you had to walk around, cells suspended outside of the walls, even two cells contained within the large fountain situated in the very centre of the fortress.

Looking over the plans, Harry had to ask himself if anyone in Luna's lineage had anything to do with the design.

"Fifteen passages..." Hermione mumbled before dipping her quill and marking on the map a few areas.

"Hmn? What's that for?"

"Devil's snare." She replied, adding her newest symbol to the legend they were acquiring. "How are you going with wards?"

Harry sighed and ran his hands through his hair. "It's not looking good. There are wards to stop prisoners getting out. It won't be as simple as using a strong flow of magic to overpower these..."

Hermione raised an eyebrow. "That's to be expected."

Each ward is keyed to a certain artefact which is stored in one of the forty nine offices... Harry rattled off his notes. I think it would be easier

to use the imperious on a few guards and get them to lead us to the correct key.

Hermione gained a thoughtful look, which Harry associated with running her quill feather through her lips.

"There has to be a backup key somewhere." Hermione suggested. To Harry's blank stare, she added. "Imagine if a temporary inmate's artefact got broken, they've have to have some way to get through."

Harry looked at the map. "Here." Harry pointed at the Head Auror's office. "We'll make him give us the master key."

"Harry, look at all the obstacles between the entrance corridor and his office!" Hermione slapped her hand down on the corridor in question.

Harry looked at the icons of Devil's snare, leech lashes, swinging axes, and a myriad of other obstacles. "It kind of makes the Triwizard look like a walk in the park doesn't it?" He looked at the traps. "Wait a minute, look at all the traps they have around the place. How the hell do the Aurors get around that place?" Harry asked.

"It would be really slow going if there was a jailbreak. They'd spend so much time negating their own traps that there's no way they could stop one." Hermione agreed.

"I reckon there's another way around the place." Harry started rubbing his chin, finding it rough. He stared at his hand in disbelief, and then ran his hand over his cheek once more.

'I'm getting a stubble.' He thought to himself.

He looked at Hermione who was giving him a huge grin. "My baby boy is growing up." She said, wiping a fake tear from her eye.

.o'OoOoO'o.

School was becoming increasingly difficult to manage between too much homework and Ginny's continual advances. He tended to

barricade himself behind a large pile of books, just so he could say "Look at how much homework I still have to do!"

The funniest thing was when he overheard her saying "I'm not going to wait for him forever" at the lunch table one day. It seemed at that point horribly insensitive for him to keep stringing her along like it would be okay one day in the future, but he desperately needed to keep Dumbledore in the dark about his relationship with Hermione.

They'd decided over the summer holidays that they were going to live in their cave together, away from everybody else, where they could be with each other and nobody could try to take them apart.

With two days before the Headmaster's expected return, Harry started to notice Draco sneering at him, which usually only meant trouble. It had been a fair while since he had seen that sneer at school. It worried him.

The evil grin was with him all through classes with the Slytherins, and it got to the point where Harry pulled Draco aside roughly after potions.

"Wipe that idiotic grin off your face Draco." He said in a calm quiet. "You're up to something that involves me, and if I don't like what it is... I'll kill you."

Draco's smile faded. "You know Potter, when you say it like that, I feel like I might even believe you." Then he grinned. "Not. Besides, I am planning something, but it doesn't involve you or your friend."

"I don't believe you." Harry spat.

"Susan Bones." Draco replied.

Harry stared at him for a moment. "When it comes to the food chain Draco, I'm higher up. Don't make plans involving me because I'll make sure they fail."

With that, Harry turned and left just as Snape came out of the room.

"Potter!" He called after him.

Harry didn't answer him and just kept walking.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry's day got even worse when he sat down for dinner and found that their school's illustrious headmaster was back two days early, twinkling his pretty little eyes at the students in the room.

Harry had to force himself not to look at Hermione in worry. Instead he looked at Ron who was staring at the Ravenclaw table with a dreamy look on his face. Harry followed his line of sight and found himself looking at Hermione anyway.

Harry looked back at Ron. "I still don't think it'll work mate." He told him.

"No, it will. I've got it all planned out."

Harry raised an eyebrow.

"I'm going to ask her help studying. Merlin knows, I need it. Don't know how I've gotten so far before, my grades have really slipped since last year."

Harry grinned. He had to admit, the fact that Hermione wasn't around made it easier to deal with Ron; their bickering now non-existent.

Harry felt that familiar brush against his mental shields and he looked up at Dumbledore to see him twinkling merrily in his direction. Dumbledore gave a polite nod and Harry smiled back. 'I wonder what he'd make of me being friendly...' He wondered to himself.

'Smile and shake the man's hand, then Avada Kedavra him in the gut when he's not paying attention. The look on his face would be worth it.' He thought to himself darkly. When was the old fool going to get it through his thick head that he couldn't breach Harry's mind.

It occurred to Harry that perhaps all the old man wanted was to get his attention. It had certainly achieved that. Perhaps that was Dumbledore's way of saying "Look, you failed, and I'm still alive. Now, I'm going to kill your girlfriend."

With that thought in his mind, Harry tore his eyes away from Dumbledore and went back to eating. He had to find some way to protect Hermione!

To make matters even worse, that night, Harry found a portkey with his name on it. He was to meet the Dark Lord alone. Harry did not want to go until he had met Hermione however.

She had appeared rather sleep deprived. It was evident to Harry that the idea of Dumbledore being back had been the cause of her lack of sleep.

Instead of studying, Harry insisted that she lay down on the bed and get some sleep. He assured her that she was safe here and that nobody would kill her in her sleep tonight.

Hermione became comfortable and drowsy as Harry watched over her. He ran his hand across her face, down her neck and over her breast.

He was still embarrassed to touch her there, but she gave a small moan of pleasure at him doing so. She appreciated it and with Harry's gentle ministrations, she was soon asleep.

He didn't tell her about the portkey to meet the Dark Lord, it would only add to her worries and make it harder for her to sleep. And so, as she slept, Harry rose from her side, donned his cloak and mask, and took the portkey to the Dark Lord's manor.

.o'OoOoO'o.

He arrived in a fancily decorated foyer. It was dimly lit, as was to be expected for this time of night.

Bellatrix Lestrange was waiting for him when he appeared.

"You're late." She told him.

"Dumbledore is back at the school." The Baron replied. "I had to be extra careful tonight."

"The Dark Lord will see you immediately." She started walking down the halls and Harry found himself dying to ask her one question.

"Why did you give me that book?"

"It was a joke you stupid kid." She grumbled. "I never expected you to actually learn from it." She turned a corner and led him past a set of knight armour, which reminded Harry vaguely of Hogwarts.

"The fact that you turned up here at all still amazes me, though I know the Dark Lord keeps you around simply for his own amusement."

"That doesn't matter to me." Harry told her. "As long as I get what I want, he can put me under the imperious and make me dance a jig for his entertainment if that's what he cared for."

Bellatrix grinned nastily. "If you were capable of wandless magic, an attitude like that would go far, but until you make him realise you're not just a joke, you're nothing to him, and you're even less to me."

She stopped at a couple of large doors adorned with a carved pattern of a large scale battle. Harry would have liked to have stared at it longer, but his host pushed on the doors, leading Harry to the dining hall of the Dark Lord.

The dining hall seemed like a glorified version of the Baron's own training hall, plus an oversized table. The Dark Lord Voldemort sat at the other end of the table, to the Left hand side of the head seat.

Next to him, on the table, lay the Sorting Hat.

Behind the head table were seventeen prisoners, and standing near the pillars were Voldemort's followers. Lucius, Wormtail, Knight, Severus, and several others that Harry did not know.

He stared at one man whom he did recognise in the room. Victor Krum stood at attention, in full Death Eater garb, minus the mask.

Harry followed Bellatrix down the table, opposite Voldemort.

"Baron Black, I'm glad you came." The Dark Lord said as he gestured to his ally to take a seat.

Harry sat himself down in front of his master. "It's rather rare you wish to speak with me, it would have been rude to pass up the invitation."

"Yes, yes it would have been."

"Who are the flunky's?" Harry asked, indicating his head towards the prisoners.

"Oh, they're just here for some entertainment." He replied nonchalantly.

Harry lifted an eyebrow, but he doubted that Voldemort could see it. Looking them over, he saw in their ranks Kingsley. He guessed that these were the people that were captured in their blitzkrieg.

"Join me for a game." Voldemort said, pulling out a deck of exploding snap cards. "I'm sure that you've played this a few times, yes?"

Harry blinked a couple of times and sat down as the Dark Lord deftly shuffled the cards. "You seem surprised Baron."

Harry laughed. "I suppose I am, I guess it's just kind of hard to imagine you spending your time playing card games and not plotting to take over the place."

"And what makes you think I'm not doing that by playing this game?" He asked as he dumped half the deck in front of Harry and put down his first card, a five.

Harry flipped a two onto the table. "Well, I wouldn't imagine you scheming over a deck of cards. But it's still hard to imagine you doing normal things."

"I eat, sleep and go to the toilet just like everybody else." He replied, flipping a nine onto the table.

Harry laughed as he threw a card down, a nine. The Dark Lord's hand came down like a cannonball and hit the cards.

Harry had expected them to explode, but they stayed intact. Instead the dark lord lifted his hand and waved it over the card, enchanting it and then banished it to the auror behind Harry. The man screamed as the card flew towards him, and on impact, exploded, leaving the man little more than a blood stain on the wall and floor.

"Interesting variation." Harry muttered.

"It's called 'House Rules'." Voldemort grinned. "We're playing for a prize each." He told Harry as he flipped a king onto the table.

Harry flipped a two. "I'm listening."

"It would appear that the venerable Sorting Hat wants to be in your possession, now that it has fulfilled my wishes in getting past the mental defences of a few choice people. I thought it would be more interesting for you to win the right to have it." An ace.

Harry raised an eyebrow as he played a three. "And if you win?"

Voldemort played a three, to which Harry's hand landed on the cards first. Harry passed his wand over the card turning it into a very sharp blade, engorged it and sent it to the auror to the right of his opponent. The auror had a stunned look on his face as the upper half of his body slid off the lower half.

Voldemort looked at the mess in appreciation. "If I win, your Baroness carries my heir."

Harry's eyes flashed in fury. "That was not part of our agreement!"

"I'm making it a part of our agreement. I need a particular breed of child to sacrifice for my experiment and I'm willing to bet that Sorting Hat that she would have powerful offspring."

Harry stood up and started walking to the door.

"Avada Kedavra." Voldemort's magic blew a hole in the ground next to Harry. "Sit down and play Baron, or you'll lose both of your lives."

Harry ground his teeth before reluctantly sitting down.

"The first one to kill the Order auror in the middle wins." He said, finishing off the rules to the game. "I don't see what the big fuss is about. You're not married. I have seen little to suggest that you two even have anything other than a mutual agreement to kill Dumbledore."

Harry threw a five onto the table. "Actually, I'm waiting to ask the Baroness' parents for their consent to Marriage."

A nine. "Then beat me Baron, if you can."

There were now fifteen aurors lined up, with Kingsley looking in fear, it didn't matter who won, he was dead. Harry flipped out his next card and they began a flurry of flicking cards.

From Kingsley's perspective, it was going to be a close game. With six down in the Dark Lord's favour and five in the Baron's, the prisoners left were sweating, along with Harry.

Harry placed a three on the table. 'I can't let him win!' He thought angrily.

His opponent placed a card on the table. Another three! Harry barely thought about it as the Dark Lord's hand came down. Harry's instincts took over and he flicked a card off the top of his deck which landed face down under Voldemort's hand.

The older man raised an eyebrow and flipped the card over. A queen. Harry let out a breath.

The old man placed a queen down and Harry's hand landed on it. They were tied.

"A close game Baron. Let us decide her fate."

Voldemort flipped his card. A drop of sweat ran down Harry's cheek. Harry's card was different.

Different.

Different.

Different.

Different.

Different.

Same!

Voldemort's hand came slamming down on the top of Harry's. He had done it by a microsecond.

"Very well, you win." Voldemort smiled. "I guess I'll have to have the other one I had in mind then picked up."

Harry let out a loud sigh and flicked his wand, sending every card towards Kingsley, having them all swarm him with papercuts, leaving him to bleed to death.

"Leave her out of any schemes you may cook up like that, we'll assassinate for you, but that was just below the belt."

Voldemort stood up and in the blink of an eye had cast the cruciatus on Harry who slumped in his chair as he writhed in pain.

'Come on Harry!' he desperately thought to himself. 'Releasing your magic was worse than this!'

Abruptly, the pain finished and a very angry Voldemort was standing over him.

"Do not overstep your bounds boy! I will not go near your mudblood again, but I will not tolerate you thinking you have any control over me. Try it one more time and it will be you lying in a pool of blood! Now take the damned hat and get out of my sight!"

The sorting hat was thrown at Harry who painfully picked himself up off the floor and stumbled down the length of the table.

He heard someone snickering at him towards the door as he moved past. Harry stopped next to him and stared at him. He did not know the man. With four flicks of his wand, magic as powerful as he could manage, he fired four ethereal stakes into each hand and foot, the force of which pushed him to the wall, pinning him there.

The man screamed in pain.

Harry spared a glance at Voldemort who did not look impressed.

With two more flicks, either one landing next to his either ear Harry turned to leave. "Don't laugh at me."

Harry tried desperately to carry his dignity until he got to the front of the manner where he could apparate out and back to the cave.

.o'OoOoO'o.

As Harry stumbled and tried to straighten himself, Hermione came running.

"HARRY!" She screamed as she caught him. "What happened? Are you alright!"

Harry looked at his love and realised exactly what it was that Voldemort would have done to her had he lost the game. "I'm sorry..."

Harry murmured. "Oh god Hermione, I am so sorry..." He cried as he slumped to the ground and wept.

"Thank Merlin you're alright! I was so scared when you weren't here!" She cradled the cloaked figure and realised he was cradling the Sorting Hat in his hands.

"It was a nasty game he played for your sake." The hat said to her, surprising them both. "Played with the world on his shoulders the boy did and didn't even realise the true stakes."

"What do you mean?" Hermione demanded.

"Tom Riddle forced Harry to play a game where if he lost, Riddle would have made you carry his child so that he could sacrifice it for his immortality."

"HE WHAT?" Hermione screamed at the hat. "How could you Harry?" She demanded.

"I didn't have a choice." Harry replied softly. "I tried to leave the game, but there was no way I could leave with so many Death Eaters and Voldemort surrounding me. I had to play."

"Yes well, now that he won, I can see about giving you both the knowledge you need to beat both Albus Dumbledore and Tom Riddle."

They both stared at the hat in disbelief. "You what?"

"You heard me. You think I wanted to be in your home because you'd give me better company?" The hat replied indignantly. "I have a job to do."

"What job?" Harry asked the hat as he wiped his eyes and ushered Hermione into the study. "I thought you were just for sorting first years into their houses."

"Boy, I anoint kings and queens, I chose leaders. Sorting children into houses is a menial task that the four founders thought would keep me amused for one night."

"So why exactly are you in our possession then?"

"You're smarter than that Granger. You've already figured out why I'm here, you just don't want to admit it."

Harry blinked, Hermione grimaced.

"You want us to lead?" Harry asked.

"Yes." The hat replied.

"Lead what?"

"Wizards Britain." Hermione replied. "You want us to take out the two controlling figures of Britain."

The hat flexed in acknowledgement. "And I shall give you the key to your success," The hat replied. "A potion, a very dangerous potion, but one I think you can handle."

.o'OoOoO'o.

The following day at school, Harry fumed as he mulled over what the hat had told him. The thought of drinking such a potion made him want to hurl. You could not drink a potion with the ingredients given and not be changed.

Hermione had cracked a fit just reading the potion's ingredients; requiring two human sacrifices, a litre of unicorn blood, two drops of werewolf spittle, and ashes of a phoenix, just to list the more exotic ingredients.

There was no doubt about it; the potion was going to be incredibly powerful. It was also incredibly dark magic.

Hermione had spent the rest of the previous night doing calculations on what effects different stages in the potion would produce. She wanted to know all of the side effects and what the end result would be.

When Hermione realised that the first quarter of the potion would have similar effects as a fertility potion, she had scratched it all out and sworn that she would not drink the potion.

Harry remembered what the Sorting Hat had said to her after her revelation. "Love is a powerful force to be reckoned with Granger. Potter of all people should know that a spell that is the embodiment of love is what kept him attached to this world when the killing curse hit him.

"If you are serious about stopping Dumbledore and Voldemort, you need a magic so strong, that it can only be made out of love of the purest kind, and there is no love greater than that generated by parents who willingly conceive a child."

Harry too had screamed at the hat. It was nigh on impossible for the both of them to willingly bring a child into a world where they would either be obliviated into submission by Dumbledore or they would probably be used as weapons of war by the Dark Lord.

There was no way that Harry could do that, and Hermione was absolutely ropable. Harry had petrified her in order to stop her from tearing the hat to shreds. After that, she was all about tearing Harry to shreds instead.

He had no idea why he had saved the stupid hat. Merlin knows that he wanted to do it himself.

Emotions ran high on the current day as Ron came dancing into the dorm, swinging off everyone's bed posts and singing Happy Day as Harry tried to read over his Astronomy textbook.

"What's got you in such a happy mood?" He demanded.

"Hermione!" Ron gleefully replied.

Harry felt a twinge of jealousy. "She accepted your study group idea did she?"

"No! But she knows my name!"

"You're the keeper of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, of course she knows your name." He informed Ron resentfully.

"You just don't know how it feels to be in love!" Ron announced. "My sister is still available."

Harry could have puked. 'No, I know what it feels like to be in love, I also know what it feels like to have some stranger hitting on your girlfriend.' He thought to himself. "Sorry Ron, but I don't think I'll be able to even consider it until after the exams. I'm really struggling as it is myself."

And so the week passed slowly, Draco's sneers had stopped which made Harry relax a little. He assumed that Draco had either backed off or fulfilled his other plan. He doubted this was the case however as Susan Bones was still sitting at the Hufflepuff table talking animatedly, none the wiser that Draco was drilling holes into the back of her head with his eyes.

After hearing his request and given specifications, Knight had been willing to hunt down a sheath for the sword of Gryffindor. What had been delivered to Harry's home did not suit the sword at all, it wasn't even properly shaped, but as the note left by Knight said, "It will do for now."

Apparently the Headmaster was approaching Hermione on a regular basis for her to see him in his office, but Hermione had insisted that she was far too busy doing homework to see him at the moment.

It helped that whenever Hermione wasn't in class, she was honestly trying to stay ahead in her classes. The fact that Dumbledore would always find her in the library studying did her credit.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry's heart was jumping erratically as he donned his Baron cape once more in preparation for their attack on Azkaban.

He looked at Hermione meaningfully as she held her mask loosely in her hand.

"This is it Hermione. Let's do our best and get your parents back."

He looked into her eyes and saw fierce determination. She was ready.

Harry stepped close and kissed her.

Hermione tilted her head and slipped her tongue into his mouth.

When they pulled apart, Harry could see her smiling as she placed her mask on top of her face. The Baroness would play this night.

.o'OoOoO'o.

They were amongst the other Death Eaters, awaiting their instructions. They knew that they would be portkeying onto a boat along side three others. It was up to them to drop the anti-portkey wards so that the other sixty could get in.

Lucius Malfoy's voice rang out from the stairs in the foyer. "When we get inside, you will break into teams of five. You are to each secure a floor while the strike team gets a hold of the keys to the cells. The strike team consists of... Draco, Wormtail, Barons Black and the Silent Knight. It will be lead by the Barons, you will all follow their orders. Understood?"

Harry grimaced. A strike team with Draco, this would not bode well. He would put aside his differences on this particular night, but his biggest concern was whether Draco could put aside his...

There was a high pitched noise came from an object in Lucius' hand. "That's the signal! Go!"

The strike team all reached for and grabbed the lifebuoy-portkey and found themselves on a boat in a storm, the rain pelted against them and visibility was almost impossible.

The only way that Harry could see the four aurors guarding the boat was by their shining auras which shimmered in the rain.

He and Hermione dashed towards the front of the boat, each using a lethal spell to dispatch their enemies before they had a chance to react.

Knight and Draco had dispatched the boat's captain and the rear guard.

As Knight moved to take over the boat, Draco went down to the holds to free the death eaters and an accountant from the cells there.

Wormtail was retching over the rails of the boat.

"You're pathetic Wormtail." Hermione told him as they walked past on the way to see Knight.

They waited patiently as the boat moved towards the shore. As soon as they were inside the anti-apparition wards, Draco and the three convicted Death Eaters threw the accountant overboard.

Victor Krum entered the cabin. "You were lucky. If you were another three minutes, you would have missed your chance."

Harry snorted. "There was no possibility of that. This mission is too important to screw up like that."

Knight pulled three wands out of his cloak. "Make good use of them Krum."

Krum took the wands and left.

"I'm surprised you never told Bellatrix and friends that I could do wandless magic." Harry told Knight when they were alone.

"I figured there was a reason you were hiding it. Truth is that you and I are very alike Baron. I joined the Dark Lord as the lesser of two evils, not because I believe in his way of life."

They waited in silence for half an hour as the boat neared the shore of Azkaban fortress.

In the rain, all you could see was a large institution looming in the distance.

As the boat crashed into the shore, the strike team jumped off onto the sand and scrambled up the small mountain face. This was not an easy task in the rain. It would have been impossible without the aid of magic.

When they reached the top, Wormtail pulled out a small disc, tapped his wand on it and said a lengthy incantation.

The disc flared and a beam of light shot out of it into the sky where it poked a hole in the clouds.

A second later, all of the death eaters from the foyer were portkeying into the area around them.

"Right on time guys, start the second phase!" Hugh Flint called.

They broke up into their individual teams and ran towards Azkaban fortress. There were no windows, no doors, no visible way of getting in or out.

"Stand aside runt." Wormtail said roughly as he barged past and put another disc on the wall. A second later, a hole appeared in the wall. "Inside everyone now!" He yelled.

Harry jumped in the hall, brandishing his wand. He looked around quickly. Nobody was there.

They kept closely together while the other groups got their bearings.

Hermione had already ascertained their position long before they even got on the island. Harry had seen her scribing the map on the inside of her mask two nights before. He had thought that she would be ruining her mask, but instead, she had a map of the first floor overlayed on her vision.

She had refused to do it to Harry's mask to ensure that one of them had perfect vision.

The strike team set off through the corridors, Knight leading the way for the most part. He lead them down certain corridors steered them away from others and deftly disarmed traps that were unavoidable.

Harry was amazed at the skill this guy showed.

"We're going to the head auror's office." Hermione directed him.

"Why?" Knight asked.

"To get the master key."

Knight thought for a moment and then led them in another direction.
"This way then."

"You sure know your way around here." Draco commented.

"What do you expect?" Wormtail replied. "He's an ex-auror who was stationed here."

Harry was stunned, but followed Knight's quick pace.

"There's no guards anywhere." Knight commented. "What's going on here?"

Baron Black was also quite concerned at the apparent lack of defence in the place. "A trap?"

"Maybe, keep your eyes keen."

"If there is nobody around here," The Baroness stated. "It would be best to just grab the keys, rather than go for the master."

"Are you stupid Black?" Malfoy asked. "The sheer number of cells in this place make the logistics of grabbing that many keys completely unmanageable."

"The kid's right." Knight agreed. "You had it right the first time, we should have planned on getting that key right from the start."

They followed the passages, as directed by the former employee, stopping only to disarm traps. "Here." He led them to a dead end and tapped on a few bricks. "This is the safe way to the head auror's office."

They warily moved forward, unnecessarily of course, until they got to the other end of the secret passage, leading them to a safe part of the hallway to the main office.

"I don't like this." Wormtail muttered.

"That's because you're a coward." Draco replied.

"Keep it together guys, we're a team until this job is done."

They approached the doors leading to the office. The huge office was empty and poorly lit, with just a few candle sticks to give any indication someone had stayed here at all. It was a grey brick room with nobody there. Wooden shelves were propped up against all walls and two large windows allowed the team to see the rain splashing against the glass.

The team moved forward tentatively.

Knight however was quite suspicious.

"I would have thought there'd be someone here." Harry said as he approached the desk.

When Knight took one step further into the room, the doors slammed shut.

"What the fu--"

Lightning struck, showing shadows of people in a room under an illusion charm.

Fifty Aurors stood around them in a circle and went invisible as the darkness enveloped them once more.

From in front of them, a man clapped his hands and the darkness dispelled into a well lit office, "You've done well, you brought them as you promised." A skinny, balding man sitting behind the head desk called. He had a scar that went from his forehead, down his nose, through his lips and down to the right of his chin. He was looking straight at Draco.

"Phillips, it's good to see you again. Though I wish you wouldn't wear those rags, they're most unbecoming." The man said to Knight.

Harry looked at Draco and whispered. "You're a dead man Draco. I warned you."

Draco grinned back and stepped off to one side, away from the group. "I'm not the dead one Potter."

Wormtail snapped around and looked at the Baron. "P-p-p-potter?"

Harry stepped forward. "I'm only going to ask this once. Where is the cell of the Granger couple."

"The Grangers? Those Death Eaters?" He waved his wand at a filing cabinet and a file came flying out of it and into his hand. "I don't usually do requests, but lets see... Arrived here, placed in cell Fifteen-five. Two days later, we received an order for immediate execution. Given the kiss that day and then cremated."

Harry couldn't believe his ears, his Baroness slumped to the floor. "No..." She whispered.

"Who gave that order?" He yelled.

"That's classified."

"NO!" Hermione screamed. "I'll kill you all! I WILL!"

"Pettigrew, do what you do best." Knight whispered to him as he fired a reducto at the nearest auror.

Peter nodded and turned himself into a rat, aurors desperately aiming at the scurrying beast.

Harry cast a shield around both Hermione and himself and then fired a stupefy at Draco who was caught completely off-guard and fell like a rock to the floor.

Hermione released her magic, blinding everyone in the room capable of seeing them and in a scream of anguish, she released a half a dozen ethereal daggers which flew around the room attacking everything in their path.

Harry ducked to avoid one and released his own magic, pouring deadly curses at those unaffected by her display of power.

Knight desperately shielded himself from the flying daggers that were flying wildly through the room, running through half a dozen men.

Harry disillusioned himself and removed the Sword of Gryffindor from its sheath.

Dodging a dagger, Harry charged at the nearest standing auror who conjured a shield to block one of the daggers as Harry swung.

Much to Harry's surprise, the sword sliced straight through the shield and embedded itself in the man.

The rat scampered around the floor frantically trying to avoid two falling bodies and getting covered with blood in the process.

The head auror conjured up a thin mist which enabled him to see where the invisible Black had gone.

Harry had to shield himself as he ran forward dodging spells and sliced the next man's arm off who screamed and fell to the floor clutching the stump.

As the number of Aurors fell, Knight found himself able to stop blocking and started firing a few spells of his own.

The aurors were getting desperate; there was only a couple left. Another one slipped over a pool of blood and felt an invisible blade pierce his heart.

The look in Hermione's eye was fearsome to anybody who looked at her face. Knight himself would describe this attack as 'the night the devil answered her call'. Her tears streaked down her face as she used the most powerful and horrible spells she knew.

Those that were not hit by the daggers were reduced to bones, or less. She repaid her anger and torment out on everybody in the room, not even realising that Harry too... Her love, was being sliced up in places. His left arm hung limply at his side as he plunged the sword of Gryffindor through the neck of the last auror.

There was nobody left standing except the three of them.

"Baroness!" Knight called urgently as Hermione's daggers continued to fly around the room.

"Hermione!" Harry yelled as he removed his disillusionment and held her by the arms, forcing her to look at him.

Her eyes were unfocussed, she didn't see him, but the tears were still falling down her face.

"HERMIONE!" Harry screamed urgently as he shook her. "Snap out of it Hermione!"

He hugged her fiercely and her sobbing slowed. "H-Harry?"

"I'm here baby." He whispered to her as he cradled her head. "I'm here."

As he held her, the daggers stopped flying and one by one, fell to the ground.

"They're gone Harry..." She whispered. "Oh my god... They're gone."

"Accio Granger file." Knight called. Nothing came to him. "Damn. It was destroyed in the fight." Looking around the office, everything was covered in blood. The shelves were nothing but splinters. Even the desk had been reduced to nothing.

Hermione lurched. "I think I'm--" Hermione pushed Harry away violently, pulled up her mask and threw up on the floor.

Harry rubbed her on the back until she had finished. She lifted her hand from the ground and stared at the blood that was all over it. "What have I done?" She asked herself.

"You saved us all." Knight said as he moved to where the head auror was. The man was still alive. Just.

"Phillips you traitor." He heaved his lungs.

"Fix him up Knight." Harry called. "He's going to be a trophy."

"I have to kill him."

"The Dark Lord will want a high up trophy to play with." Harry insisted.

"He killed my wife and baby girl Baron!" He said. "This man's life belongs to me."

Harry stared at him. "I-I'm sorry. I didn't know."

Knight looked at the man. "Fifteen years Ben." He whispered. "I've waited fifteen years for my revenge. You killed my child. She was my world, and you took her from me."

"It was ordered, I couldn't disobey."

"You could have! YOU SHOULD HAVE! She was my baby!" Knight shouted.

"There was a prophecy..."

"THERE IS ALWAYS A PROPHECY!"

"Fifteen children had to be killed in order to stop Britain from falling, if even one of them survived, it would mean the end of it all. That's what the prophecy stated. We all swore at the academy--"

Harry perked up his ears. "Did you kill every one of those children?"

"No. Three are still alive, we've been trying to hunt them down for years."

'She should have been killed the moment she was born.' Moody's last words before he died crept back to him. "Why did they have to be killed? What were the conditions?"

"Children, marked with the star behind their ear, their ultimate happiness will be the destruction of the world as we know it."

Harry frowned. The last thing he wanted to hear about right now was prophecies.

"You'll never hurt another child again." Knight said lowly. "Avada Kedavra,"

Peter Pettigrew had transformed back into a human and grabbed a locket from around the deceased man's neck. "This would be the key." He said to everyone.

"Give it to me." Harry demanded, reaching out for it. "I'm taking Draco back with me, and nobody is to speak about it. Understand me. Not Lucius, not Voldemort, not even your familiar. Do I make myself clear?"

They both nodded.

Harry helped Hermione get up, but she was no longer willing to move under her own steam. "Come on my love, let's finish this."

"I don't want to Harry, just leave me alone. There is no reason for me to go on anymore."

"Hermione, I need you. Please." He looked into her eyes, willing her to understand. "You have to live. For their sakes. I know that when my parents died, they did it so that I could live, you have to believe that's what your parents wanted for you too!"

"You don't know that Harry, they might not have, if Dumbledore did not want them to believe that, they wouldn't."

"You know what I believe?" Harry asked her. "I believe that once someone dies, their spirits are able to see the truth."

"The truth Harry? The truth is that I just killed all these people! Why would my parents want me to live for that? I have one of those stupid stars!" She cried, folding back her left ear.

Behind the ear was a delicate and perfect four pointed star, a birthmark.

Knight approached her. "I don't think you have to worry about that my girl. My daughter had one of those stars too and I knew what the prophecy said. That doesn't mean that I wanted her to die. Truth be told, I'd be damned happy if my children came after me knowing they did everything in their power to rescue me from something I did. Even if I didn't.

"In fact, you know what, I am proud of you, even if you're not my daughter."

Hermione looked up at him and wiped her eyes. "T-Thank you Knight. That means a lot to me."

Harry smiled at him and mouthed 'thanks' as he picked up her mask.

Hermione was far from happy, but Knight's words gave her the ability to move forward.

They stepped out of the office, with Knight levitating a disillusioned Draco's body behind him, Harry supporting Hermione with an arm around her waist.

They made it back to the stair well and moved up to the next level.

"What took you so bloody--"

"Bloody is the word." The second floor team stated as he saw the look of the strike team, Wormtail looking like he'd gone for a swim in a pool of blood.

"Enough with the small talk." Knight told them, "How many on this level?"

"None."

"Then regroup on the next available level."

They headed up to the floor above.

"Fifteen people on this level, none death eaters."

"Free them all." Harry told the masked man.

"All of them?" The man asked.

"You heard me! Move it!" Harry demanded, handing over the key. The man scurried off. "I've got to get back to school before the night is out." He mumbled. "Ouch!" He winced as Hermione tugged on his injured arm to steady herself.

"Sorry," She mumbled.

"Don't worry about it." Harry turned to Knight. "Is anybody checking the underwater cages?"

"There's nothing but trouble down there Baron." The older man replied.

"I don't care, we're getting everybody out. Make sure everybody understands that. Take care of things for a moment." Harry said as he wrapped his arm around Hermione and headed back to the first floor.

"Baron! You don't have the key!"

Harry ignored him. It didn't matter if he had the key if there was nobody there in the first place, but he just needed to be sure.

"Are you okay?" He asked his girl.

"What kind of a stupid question is that?" She retorted weakly.

When the Baron found the large, overflowing fountain housing the two underwater cages, he placed Hermione at the edge of the pool and cast a bubblehead charm.

The water was ice cold and uninviting.

There were no plants, nothing in the bottom of the water. Not even fish.

All Harry could see were the two cages.

The first one was empty, but there was definitely something in the one furthest away from him.

He moved towards the cage, filled with air. Inside was a sleeping figure, half his height and looking incredibly pale.

Harry just about choked, and then remembered that he was breathing air.

He surfaced as quickly as he could.

"Hermione!" He called. "There's a young girl down there."

This was one thing that snapped Hermione completely out of her reverie. "What?"

"We have to get her out of there!" He called.

Together, they used a wandless version of evanesco to evaporate the water from the pool.

With the water gone, Harry jumped into the pool and held his arms out to Hermione who jumped into them.

"We're not going to be able to break through that ward Harry!" Hermione informed him.

Harry cast his ward detection spell, only to find it did not work.

"Let's try overpowering it together."

"Are you sure that's safe?"

"We might be able to do it together." He said pleading. "We have to get her out of there, she looks sick!"

Hermione shook her head but put her hand on the bars and her aura increased to it's maximum level. The ward glowed red and began buzzing.

Harry too closed his eyes and let go of his magic, feeding it into the ward. It started to glow so hot that he could feel the heat and he started to sweat.

The magic they were pouring in was not enough, the ward held still, and then they both felt it. A third flow of magic. Weak, but enough.

The ward shattered, bringing Harry and Hermione back into the real world.

They stared into the cage as a small girl in an elegant dress collapsed once more.

"Diffindo" Harry sliced open the door and grabbed the small girl.

The girl weakly snuggled up to him as he cradled her in his arms.

"We have to get her out of here."

"We have to get ourselves out of this pond first." Hermione replied.

Harry raised his wand at the wall, aiming slightly upwards.

"Diffindo" His spell flung forwards into the wall, throwing dirt, rocks and concrete everywhere, but creating a ramp for them and careened into the walls of Azkaban.

Screams were heard from inside the building.

"Uhhh... SORRY!" Harry called up to them.

With a child around his neck and his arm around his beloved, Harry lead them back to the stairs where he waited for the Death Eaters to finish freeing everyone. He guessed that the time was around four in the morning. He really needed to get back to Hogwarts as soon as possible.

"Hurry it up!" Harry called.

A group of un-uniformed men came down the stairs, Harry assumed that these were his gifts to the Dark Lord. "Alright everyone!" He called over the dwindling, but still strong rain. "Line up outside! Don't try and run away or you'll drop dead before the third step."

"Wormtail! Get your ratty arse down here!" Harry called. "Go find something we can make a portkey out of, long enough for every prisoner here."

He returned shortly after with a long rope which he had acquired from one of Azkaban's disarmed traps. With a mutter of 'portus' They had themselves a Portkey long enough for a hundred and fifty men, women and a couple of werewolves.

As everyone gathered in the courtyard, Knight called out. "Alright everyone grab the rope. If anybody is left behind, I'll avada your arse. Wormtail, open that ward."

Peter grumbled but pulled out another of those discs, and once the familiar light lit up the easing clouds, all but five and a half people were left, four and a half of them visible.

"The mission went well kids, I'm very proud of you both." Knight said to them. "I hope that we can work together again in the future."

Harry smiled and turned to Pettigrew. "Tell anybody about our identity or our magic and I'll see that you end up like Malfoy."

Pettigrew gulped and tentatively reached out for the brick he was using as a portkey.

Harry pulled out the portkey to the cave and held it out for everyone. He gripped especially tight onto the child. She would not go to Voldemort. That just seemed too cruel.

A second later, there was nobody left in Azkaban except a bunch of spiders, rodents and a single kneezle called 'custard' who was mourning the passing of his owner.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry placed each of the girls in one of the beds and wished them a safe rest

Knight removed the disillusionment from Draco, leaving him on the floor. "What are you going to do with this little creep."

Harry glared at the traitor and put the stasis charm on him, collapsing to the floor from the effort.

"You're weak kid, you should stop doing such excessive magic for a bit."

"I'm fine." Harry insisted, but still wobbled as he pushed himself up.

while he dealt with the Dark Lord again. He hated facing Voldemort, but he did bring quite a gift this time.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry apparated to the manor where everybody else was waiting.

"Baron Black." The voice of Voldemort rang from the steps. Harry looked up to him and approached the man, kissing the hand that was offered to him. "Who are all of these people you have brought?"

"Whatever you want them to be my lord." Harry replied smoothly. "I have brought your death eaters and everybody else in the prison. I thought you might enjoy some more people to torture when you are mad, or perhaps, time willing, you could save seventeen for a casual game of snap... for the fun of it."

Voldemort sneered. "Were there any casualties?"

"Just one my lord." Harry replied. "It seems that young master Malfoy tried to lead the strike team into a trap and got killed in the crossfire."

Lucius Malfoy shook with rage. "How dare you!" He screamed. "My son would never do anything against the Dark Lord!"

Voldemort put his hand in front of Lucius. "Knight, Wormtail. The truth."

"It is as he said my lord." Wormtail agreed slowly.

"He tells the truth my lord. The trap seems to have been laid for me." Knight said, taking the heat off of Harry a little.

"Very well, Death is too good for a traitor..." Voldemort sounded disappointed. "Prisoners to my holding cells, the rest of you may enjoy the rest of your night."

Snape, Bellatrix and Lucius moved to manage the prisoners.

"And what of your quest, my young friend?" Voldemort asked.

"Dead, my lord. The Baroness will probably grieve for a while."

Voldemort looked almost sad for a moment. "Another reason to see the old man dead."

The Baron nodded gravely. "Yes sir, yes it is. With your leave, I wish to take care of her."

"Very well. You have pleased me this night Baron."

Harry bowed to his head and apparated home.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry took off his mask and sighed. It was not yet light outside. Thank god for that.

Much to Harry's surprise, Hermione was up and walking around their home with a serene look on her face. "Harry. You're home." She sounded unnaturally calm.

"Hermione?"

"I'm fine Harry, I asked the Sorting Hat to move my thoughts to my subconscious for a while. He says they won't stay there long, but I should be able to get back to school now."

"You're sure you're ok?" She nodded. "And what of our little friend?"

"Yes, well... There's something you need to know about her." Hermione told him with a wince.

"What?"

"She's a vampire."

Author's note:

I'm sure there's a few people who hate me for this chapter, but a lot of this chapter is what I've had in mind ever since I read the challenge in the first place.

One of my goals for this chapter was to show that Voldemort is a scheming person, an evil scheming person. I never wanted to give the impression that he was any better than Dumbledore. Having said that, he's been reincarnated, but Voldemort is first and foremost, still human (if only barely). He does still have emotions too.

I was thinking of leaving off that last line, but the last thing I wanted to do was to give a total cliffhanger at the end of this particular chapter.

I offer my appologies and the promise of a bit of fluff next chapter. (There's a cute little vampire kid, how could that not be cute?) So please continue reading, things will probably start looking up from here.

--Steven

Chapter 08 - Falling Apart

Harry stepped into the bedroom that he and Hermione shared.

Laying on the bed was the young girl, and apart from her deathly pale face, Harry would have had no idea she was a vampire. Then again, he mused to himself, what other signs did they give? The girl wasn't about to get up and just display superhuman strength.

"Are you positive?" He asked his girlfriend.

"The sorting hat knows her."

Harry frowned. "Does it now? That seems rather convenient doesn't it?" He asked as he stomped out of the room and into the study where the hat was kept on the table.

"Explain yourself, hat." Harry yelled at it. "Who is she?"

"Don't yell at me Potter." The hat replied smoothly. "As for whom she is, I'll let her introduce herself when she wakes up, but you should know that she is no threat to you."

Harry glared at it. "It seems rather convenient doesn't it that the only person I bring back with me to our cave and you just happen to know who she is. To me, it looks like you deliberately sent us there to get her." He accused the hat. "You messed with my head didn't you!"

"I did nothing of the sort. You are who you are." The animated object retorted indignantly. "You are following the flow of destiny. She is someone important to whom you are, or rather, who you will become.

"It is not my duty to mess with your head as I see fit, it is my duty to see that you do not fail."

"And messing with Hermione's head was not as you saw fit?" He responded angrily.

"Harry," Hermione said, putting a hand on his shoulder. "I asked him to do it. I- I can't keep up the facade that we've been partaking in if I'm crying over my parents."

Harry turned his glare on her, then bit back an angry response and took a deep breath.

"Tell me something," He said, not looking at either. "Did you know her parents were dead?"

"No." The hat replied. "Albus Dumbledore is the only human alive with mental shields strong enough to withstand my legilimency ability."

Harry softened and muttered a 'sorry' before sitting down on the chair, exhausted and winced as he remembered he had an injured arm.

He lifted up his sleeve revealing a deep gash.

"Did I do that?" Hermione asked.

"Don't worry about it." Harry replied. "If it weren't for you, I'm not convinced we'd have survived."

Hermione retrieved the first aid kit they had for such occasions and started to bandage and clean it up.

The loss of Hermione's parents felt like a personal blow to Harry as well as he reflected on it. He was serious that he wanted to ask Hermione's parents for her hand in marriage and now it wasn't possible, but more than that, now his beloved was like him in a way that he did not wish on anybody. Least of all, her.

"I wish I knew what this stuff about the star-crossed meant." Hermione said as she wiped a wet cloth over his arm.

"I wish I could tell you." Harry honestly. That was another question that needed answering.

"You should both go now, lest you be discovered." The hat told them as Hermione finished wrapping and applied a sticking charm to it. "If you want to leave a good impression on your young friend tomorrow, it would be good of you to give up some blood. In which case, I'd suggest bringing some potions to help with blood loss."

Harry nodded and took off his dementor cloak before kissing Hermione goodbye and taking his portkey back to Hogwarts.

.o'OoOoO'o.

When the newspapers hit the dining hall the following morning, Harry waited in trepidation of what the response would be.

Dumbledore, as to be expected was absent from the dining hall again. Harry suppressed a small grin at the thought that he was being kept sufficiently occupied to not bother himself or Hermione.

"Azkaban was attacked!" Seamus cried, slamming the paper down on the table, knocking over Ron's orange juice which ran down his robes.

Ron however, was too shocked to respond to the wetness down his shirt. "What about the aurors? Azkaban is the most secure place in the world!"

"All dead." Seamus said reading further. "Apparently they were all in the head office when they were attacked, sliced to ribbons they were."

Harry didn't need to fake being disgusted. Hearing Seamus read out loud about it brought back the memory of what he and Hermione had done in there a few hours ago.

He shivered involuntarily.

"Are you alright Harry?" Ron asked. "You don't suppose... he... is back do you?"

"Who?" Harry asked.

"You-know-who."

"Voldemort?" Harry asked and everyone hit the decks, Ron smacking his head on the table on the way down.

Harry burst out laughing as Ron picked himself off the floor and rubbed his head.

"Mister Potter." He heard a stern voice from behind. "You thought that was funny did you?" He turned around to see Professor McGonagall glaring at him, her lips pursed.

"I'm sorry professor; I wasn't laughing at the predicament, just Ron."

"Come with me."

Ron gave him a half-hearted sympathetic look as he got up and followed his head of house up to Dumbledore's office.

Harry hitched his breath as Professor McGonagall lead him into the room.

Dumbledore had his head in the floo and was actively talking with someone.

"Albus, I've brought him."

Dumbledore informed his contact that he'd speak with him later and pulled his head out of the floo. "Harry," He said shortly as he strode purposefully towards his desk and retrieved a parchment.

He handed it to the much younger student who glanced at the old man suspiciously and looked at the list.

Draco Malfoy, Gregory Goyle, Vincent Crabbe...

It was a list of Death Eaters.

"Do those names mean anything to you?"

"No sir." Harry replied. "They're mostly slytherins except for a few ravenclaws and one hufflepuff."

"There are two names missing from that list." Dumbledore informed him.

"All of those students were not in bed at three this morning. Interesting to note that the two that aren't on that sheet of paper were using the same doppelganger charm on their beds. Even more interesting to note that one of them did not return to the school."

Harry looked blankly at Dumbledore and shook his head, thankful that Dumbledore had given up trying to bombard his mental shields.

"Where is Draco Malfoy?" The older man asked.

"I don't know."

"Enough with the games Baron Black!" Dumbledore yelled. "I've been playing these games far longer than you have."

"Did you think I don't know or wouldn't find out about your attacks on the Order or the pact you made with Lord Voldemort?"

Harry set his jaw and ground his teeth, then grinned. "Well, I was hoping you wouldn't find out for a little longer."

There was a knock at the door and Hermione stepped into the room without asking for permission. There was a cold, distant gaze in her eyes.

"And now the Baroness is here too." Dumbledore said, angrily stepping towards her. "finite." Dumbledore waving his wand over her.

Hermione blinked and saw Harry looking at her with deep concern in his eyes. Her eyes focussed and she peered upwards into an old wizard's eyes which were consumed with fire.

"I know for a fact that you were both involved in the death of Alastor Moody." The old man yelled once more, he looked as if he had tears

building in his eyes which were rapidly evaporating into flames as soon as they left his eyes.

"You killed my phoenix." He said, stalking between you both. "I don't know how you managed it, but Fawkes meant more to me than you could imagine."

"Hermione's parents meant more to her than you could ever imagine." Harry said defiantly.

Dumbledore flicked his wand at them both and they were each held rigid with a full body bind so tight they couldn't breathe.

"They were a punishment, not bait." The old man told him as he levitated Hermione's prone body beside Harry. "Where are the sorting hat and the sword?"

"Voldemort has it." Harry replied hoarsely.

"And where is Voldemort?"

"I don't know, I've only gotten there via portkey."

Dumbledore glanced at Hermione.

"It's true. We don't know."

Dumbledore rubbed his eyes in frustration and pushed his glasses back. "I want you to know Harry that I want to kill you, for what you did to Fawkes."

"The feeling is mutual." Harry replied.

"The only thing keeping you alive is the prophecy." He said as he rested himself, the anger taking its toll on him. "Miss Granger, you on the other hand, I'm still trying to decide on."

"So you're not sending the Order after me any more?" She choked out.

"You are Star Crossed. That means you have been blessed with power; power to change the world my dear. I need to harness that power to restore the balance of things once your Harry has taken care of a certain thorn in my side."

"You'll never control me!" She screamed at him.

"We'll see. I hope for your sake I can, otherwise your life is forfeit miss Granger."

Dumbledore levelled his wand at Hermione and chanted a word that chilled Harry to the bone. "Imperio."

Hermione's eyes glazed over once more and lost their focus.

The older man smirked and cast the unforgivable once more on Harry.

Harry felt that familiar calmness wash over him.

Dumbledore regarded them for a moment and then grabbed two goblets, checking carefully which one was which and held them out to each of them.

"Drink." He said.

They each took the goblets in their hands and as Harry brought it to his lips, something screamed in him: 'Do not drink that!'

'Why not? It's just a drink, and I am kind of thirsty.'

'Because Dumbledore gave it to me! I don't trust it.'

'It'll be okay.'

Harry's hands shook.

Out the corner of his eyes, he saw Hermione hesitate a moment, and then downed the contents swiftly.

'No!' His mind screamed, but his hands brought the goblet to his lips and he felt moisture. 'NO!' He pleaded with his hands.

His mouth opened and as he took in some of the liquid, he felt some of it go down his throat and his mind panicked.

He threw the goblet across the room in an uncoordinated flick and spat out as much as he could, gagging and bringing up spit which he freely let loose on Dumbledore's carpet.

The old man gave a pained look as he watched.

Harry pulled his wand out of his robe, pointed it at Hermione and yelled. "finite!"

Hermione blinked and after a second pulled out her own wand.

With a large tug, their wands flew out of their hands into Dumbledore's.

"You are but children."

"Avada Kedavra!" Hermione screamed at him holding her hand towards him.

Dumbledore looked in shock as the green beam flashed towards him. The shock lasted long enough for him to grab his robes and flick them around him.

The killing curse cut through his robes and exploded into the window behind him.

Harry saw a flare of aura behind him and ducked as an explosive spell erupted behind him and flew over his head.

Harry allowed his own magic out to its full ability and fired a reducto at Dumbledore which he dodged using his cape trick. The spell shot past him and blew an entire wall and half the roof to smithereens.

He desperately wished he had the sword of Gryffindor in his hands.

What he wished more than that though was that he'd had enough sleep to recharge himself after his rampage the night before.

"I suppose it is not surprising that you are both capable of wandless magic." A0; The older man commented as he sent a rainbow of colours at each of them. "A spell like that you must have used a ritual for however. I'm not sure I approve of it."

Harry continued to block everything that came towards him.

Dumbledore showed an incredible combat ability for someone his age, shocking Harry and Hermione both by using both of his hands to simultaneously cast two different spells, often one shield and one attack.

His shields were small and efficient, often exactly in the place where spells were due to hit. Harry figured that the older man had become so efficient at using his magic that he wasn't using anymore than necessary.

After all, shields grew from the point of focus, so folding out a full shield did take half a second longer and did pull on Harry's magic more than such small efficient ones.

Hermione fired a spell Harry had never seen before at their assailant which shook the room as it exploded into the shelves behind him, showing them with debris. One of Dumbledore's spells lashed across her heel and she crumpled to the floor.

Harry was quick on the uptake though and sent a shove towards her just before Dumbledore fired another spell at the defenceless Hermione. Harry's spell was much quicker to arrive and Hermione skidded a few centimetres away from the Dumbledore's. Hermione shielded herself from the next spell at the same time Harry was forced to defend himself too.

"Lumos Fulgeo!" Dumbledore yelled as the room erupted into light and slowly died out.

Harry reacted by disillusioning himself and blocking his magic.

"Albus!" Minerva McGonagall erupted into his office and stood shocked as she saw the wreckage and Hermione struggling to get up from the ground.

"What is going on here?"

Three wands flew out of Dumbledore's pocket and into Hermione's hand as she reached into her pocket and disappeared.

"Damn." The old man mumbled.

"Albus!" Minerva demanded.

"Harry, come out!"

Harry hid on a part of the floor with no carpet, having learned his lesson from Hestia.

He was glad that Hermione had gotten away, but worried about her. From what he could see on the opposite side of the room, whatever took her down was nasty.

Harry started to feel rather sweaty.

He saw Dumbledore's aura flaring and the room got hotter and hotter.

Dumbledore scanned the room and fired a stunner right at Harry who scampered to one side. 'Shit! How did he find me?'

"Stay where you are Minerva. We have a dark wizard in the room."

Harry ran to his professor and held one hand around her neck and another on his portkey.

"That won't work with me." Dumbledore said as he put a bind on Harry who knew he'd been right to prepare himself.

He didn't need to move to push his magic into the portkey and activate it, disappearing to their cave.

Dumbledore scowled and turned to the wreckage that was his office. Those two brats had not only nicked off with his wand, but also his transfiguration teacher.

It didn't matter though, he was confident that Miss Granger would return at the least. His little Dark Lord killer had managed to beat his imperio. That was a mild surprise. He was aware that Harry had managed to break off an attack from Barty Crouch Jr, but Crouch was a mediocre wizard at best.

His wand he could live without. He raised both hands and called out authoritatively "Reparo!"

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry landed ungracefully to the floor and quickly summoned his Professor's wand and kept his hand trained on her, removing the disillusionment from himself and rose the anti-apparition wards.

Gathering herself from the shock of it all, Professor McGonagall rose to full height. "Perhaps you would care to explain this preposterous behaviour! Mister Potter! I shall have you expelled for your behaviour! Using magic against the headmaster! Good grief! We taught you better than that!"

"Shut up." Harry growled, shocking his Professor into silence.

"Are you alright Hermione?" Harry asked her gently.

"Do I look alright you prat?" She hissed as she bandaged her foot and performed a numbing charm. "What in Merlin's name were you thinking when you brought her here?"

"I'd hoped that a hostage would have diffused Dumbledore, but he's too powerful to fall for that." Harry mused.

"I could have told you that!" Hermione snapped.

"Hermione Jane Granger and Harold James Potter! Explain yourselves!" Their stern head of house looked like she'd explode if she didn't get any answers.

"There's no point." Harry snapped in return. "As soon as we let you leave this place, Your beloved headmaster would obliviate you anyway."

"I don't think I like what you're suggesting."

"What is all this noise?" A timid voice called from their hallway.

Harry turned to see their young guest peering from behind the bedrooms.

"You're awake." Harry said. "I didn't mean to wake you." He glared at his professor.

Minerva McGonagall looked at the young girl. "You... look familiar."

"As do you." The girl replied. "It has been a long time Minerva." She came from behind the passageway and curtsied, holding the Sorting Hat in her hands.

"Cynwise... DeBeau... Gryffindor..." McGonagall stared in amazement.

The girl looked towards Harry and Hermione. "You were the ones who rescued me from that prison did you not? Osfrid said to call you the Barons Black."

"The... Barons... Black?" The old lady looked ready to faint, but scanned the room. Her eyes landing on the dementor cloaks and their masks.

"Osfrid?" Harry asked. "You mean the hat?"

"Osfrid is no mere hat, sir Baron. I am surprised that he would even let you call him that."

"Wait..." McGonagall said, leaning against a wall to support herself. "It was you both who raided the Headmaster's study and put the poison in his lemon drops?"

"He started it." Harry replied childishly.

"Allow me to explain." Hermione said as she propped herself up and launched into an abbreviated spiel about the state of the world. Naturally, Minerva didn't want to believe a word of it and insisted they were both off their rockers.

Their vampire charge had listened with due interest as the conversation rose to arguments once more only to be shushed by the Sorting Hat, now dubbed Osfrid.

It was only when it spoke did the old professor take them seriously.

"There is no known way to block an obliviation other than a shield." She said afterwards, taking a seat. "Once it has been applied, there is no way to undo the block without causing permanent damage to the brain."

"Vampires can't be obliviated." Cynwise said proudly.

"Then I suppose you are both Vampires." McGonagall said suspiciously.

"How could we be vampires Professor? We've been going to your middle of the day transfiguration class."

"Then how could you both be capable of it."

"We don't know." They each replied.

"And all this business of You-know-who being resurrected is frightening."

Harry snorted. "You think it's frightening to hear about it? How do you think I felt playing cards with him? Let me tell you, playing cards with Voldemort is nothing like a friendly game between old mates."

The feline animagus gawked. That was the straw that broke the proverbial cat's back as they say. She fainted.

"Good one Harry." Hermione grumbled.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Luna Lovegood shuffled into the transfiguration class, Professor McGonagall had promised her that if she did really well transfiguring her textbook into a bookcase then she could go hunting for the phantomyme-horse rumoured to be in the Dark Forest with Hagrid.

She had been itching to go ever since she'd heard of it and today she might finally get that chance. Still, it would be a really hard task to achieve.

She took her place at the desk and waited for the professor to arrive.

"Good morning class." said the voice of an elderly man. "Before we begin class today, I'd just like to have a quick word with you all: obliviate."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry poured over the auror training manual looking for something to help Hermione's ankle.

His mind however was not so much on how to fix her ankle, though he tried to demand his mind be, but it continually floated to what Dumbledore had in the goblets.

He didn't feel any different, but perhaps it took a while to kick in.

Hermione too was looking through books, flipping angrily through pages and refusing to look at Harry at all.

When Harry asked if she was mad with him, she just snapped 'No' and went back to flipping pages.

"Was it because we failed?"

She paused a moment. "He was right there, and we couldn't keep up with him Harry. How are we supposed to beat him if we can't even defend ourselves against him?"

Harry shook his head.

"I did offer you one way." Osfrid piped up from his shelf.

"I'm not taking that damned potion!" Hermione yelled at it. "Not unless it was Ronald drinking the other half!"

She slapped her hands to her mouth and her eyes go wide.

Harry blinked in disbelief. "Ron?" He shook his head. "Ronald! What the hell does he have to do with anything? Have you suddenly upped and decided that you wouldn't mind bringing a child into this world as long as the father is so easy to control that-- that..."

And there it was.

"Love potions." Hermione said. "He used the imperious on me to get me to drink a love potion. Ron is so easily controlled that, if I'm in love with him, and I can feel it now... That same warm feeling I used to feel whenever I said your name..."

Professor McGonagall was laying down on a cushioned floor her eyes open and just listening to the banter of the children and wishing that they were wrong. But she knew herself, Hermione Granger was more than a bright kid, and Harry Potter was no muscle-head either.

She shifted her head to look at Cynwise who was staring at her, just as she used to the last time she had seen her, when Minerva herself was just a little girl.

"Professor." Harry's voice drifted to her. "Do you know what the two potions on Dumbledore's desk contained?"

"No, but I can guarantee that Severus brewed them."

Harry nodded. "I'm going to have a word with our friendly potions teacher tonight."

There was an awkward silence and Harry returned to the book, finally able to concentrate on finding something to help his friend.

He flipped a few pages of the Auror manual and found the end of the field medicine. "Nothing here."

"There is nothing in here either." Hermione replied sadly.

"Perhaps Knight will know what to do."

Harry ran his hands through his hair.

"You're looking pale." McGonagall said, breaking the stress.

"We never did get those blood replenishing potions did we?" Harry asked Hermione.

"Speak for yourself Mister disorganised."

Harry sighed at her harsh tone. He missed the leniency that Hermione normally allowed him.

Harry rose from his seat and knelt down in front of the vampire.

"I'll let you have some of my blood if you promise not to turn me."

"You- You would do that for me?"

"I'm dangerous, not heartless." Harry replied with a smile and a quick look at McGonagall and held his wrist out.

She stared at it.

"I don't suppose you could... umm..."

Harry stared blankly at her, and looking very embarrassed, Cynwise lifted her lips to reveal that she had large gaps between her teeth where a vampire should have elongated canines.

Harry was surprised that a vampire could be missing those teeth.

"Were you missing those teeth when you got turned or something?" Harry asked her.

"I was not thank you very much!" She snapped impetuously. "For your information, I gave them up."

Harry smiled at her sacrifice and used his wand to lacerate his wrist.

The indignation melted from her face and she instantly started drinking the life from him.

Harry smiled and turned to see his Professor smiling gently at him, despite what they had gotten her into.

.o'OoOoO'o.

When Knight arrived that evening he was rather quickly bombarded with medical questions from Harry to fix Hermione's foot.

Entering the study where everybody was, he was shocked to see another person in the abode. He of course, knew exactly who she was, and she knew him after a second to recognise his unmasked and unguarded face.

"Picking up old grannies now are we Baron?" He asked with a stern face.

"Watch your tongue Mister Phillips, I may be aging slowly but I'm still strong enough to transfigure you into a rat!"

"Thanks, but no thanks. That's what we keep Pettigrew around for."

"P-P-Peter Pettigrew?"

"I would think you'd be used to the shocks by now professor." Hermione said rather tartly from her seat.

Knight approached the younger girl and unwrapped her foot to take a look at it. "I've seen worse." He muttered and pulled a piece of paper out of his robes.

"Strike order for the Baron Black."

Harry took the piece of paper off of him and looked at it. Remus Lupin.

Harry closed his eyes. Things were just going from bad to worse. "I can't do this one."

"Specific orders from the Dark Lord. He figured you could handle this one alone as he's given the Baroness time out for mourning."

With that, Hermione's face became pained. With all the commotion of the past day, she had momentarily forgotten about her parents.

Harry sighed. "Alright, I'll do it. Where's the intel?"

Knight shook his head and handed him a photo. "For apparating reference. It's a good night for this target."

'A full moon then...' Harry sighed and took the photo. "While I'm doing that, I'd like to ask a favour. I want to find out what kind of love potion Snape brewed for Dumbledore today."

Knight raised an eyebrow. "I'll look into it for you."

Harry nodded and gently placed a hand on Hermione's shoulder. "I'm going to take care of someone."

"Potter... You can't be serious!" McGonagall finally protested. "You can't go and kill someone because he asks you to!"

Hermione nodded to Harry. "If you can't get it out of him, bring him here. I'll get the information out of him." She said softly to Knight.

"I can." Harry replied in response to his transfiguration teacher's statement. "For two reasons, One less doll for Dumbledore to control, and because it was part of our deal for getting Hermione's parents out of Azkaban."

"Those... Dolls are living people!"

"You're a doll." Harry said simply. "While you're within his reach. I doubt that you are now who you have been in the past."

With that, Harry walked to the entrance and grabbed his cloak and mask.

When he placed his hand on the sword of Gryffindor, that timid voice rang once more from behind him. "Please don't take that sword Baron."

Cynwise had snuck up on him as he'd been told Vampires did.

Harry jumped with a start and looked at her.

"That sword is a family heirloom; it pains me to see my great grandfather's sword being wielded with so little care."

Harry wondered what she meant and pulled the sword from its sheath. Blood was caked onto the blade, and upon seeing it, Cynwise turned her head.

"I'm sorry. I'll clean it when I get back."

"And don't use that sheath. I will get its original one when I am well enough to move outside of your home."

Harry nodded and left the sword where it was.

He donned his cape and mask, and with a small wave to the Vampire, apparated to the place depicted on the photo.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Remus' home was a run down apartment in a run down part of a muggle town. His home had bars on the windows, reminding him a lot of the Dursleys.

Harry knew for a fact that the bars were not meant to keep burglars out, like the rest of the neighbourhood, but instead to keep the tenant inside on a certain day of the lunar calendar.

Harry looked sadly at his wand. It felt like his life was falling apart in front of him.

Hermione was treating him as a stranger, and he himself no longer felt that urge to hug her at the loss of her parents, the urge he knew he should have to tell her it would be alright and that together, they'd make things all better.

He could feel the effects of the love potion drawing his affection to someone else, and Harry had his suspicions who, but until he saw that person or made a Freudian slip as Hermione had done, he wouldn't know for sure.

Without Hermione by his side... He wasn't sure if he could kill Remus Lupin. The last friend his parents had.

Harry sniffed back a tear. Perhaps McGonagall was right.

There was one person who Harry would like to ask advice from, but the only way to get to that person was...

"Alohamora." The door clicked open and turning the handle, he came face to face with a growling werewolf.

Harry smiled gently at the werewolf that lowered itself to attack him.

"Petrificus Totalis." The wolf froze in its place and Harry closed the door and took off his mask and cape.

"Hey, Professor Lupin." Harry said gently as he pulled the wolf to the middle of the carpet and sat down on the older man's couch.

"I wanted to talk to you." Harry told him. "I've done some really awful things, and I've had some really awful things done to me.

"I know you think I'm crazy, the way I was acting, but hear me out alright? Pretend I'm not crazy for a moment, and tell me what you think afterwards."

And so Harry told Lupin what he thought and about the truths of the world.

At some points during the conversation, the clouds would cover the moon and the wolf would change into a man. The first point at which Harry went to one of the bedrooms and got a sheet, placed it beside him and laid back at the couch and deliberately did not look in his direction.

When the story was told, Harry flicked his wand and released him from the bind and waited for a response.

As a wolf, its first response was to approach Harry's face and sniff him.

Harry allowed this, but protested when it proceeded to lick him. He couldn't help but laugh.

It took another 10 minutes before the moon disappeared behind the clouds.

Remus was quick to put the sheet around him.

"You really believe that don't you?" He said quietly. "You believe it so vividly that I have a hard time telling you that it's false."

"It's like we live in two different realities." Harry replied. "I know my world is true, and you know that yours is true. But only one is the real world, so one of us is wrong."

"You sound like your mother when she got all philosophical."

"I was ordered here to kill you, you know."

"Really?" Lupin asked. "Were you ordered to kill Nymphadora Tonks too?"

Harry looked deep into Lupin's eyes, trying to discern the origin of that question and truthfully answered, "No. I don't know who did."

That answer seemed to pacify him. "Orders from You-know-who?"

"Voldemort." Harry replied to which the other man present shuddered. "He is back, whether I'm in my own world or not, that is a cold fact."

"Then why aren't you killing me?"

Harry shook his head. "Because... I need your help. I don't know what to do anymore. I'm not strong enough to kill Dumbledore... I really want everyone to be free to just live their own lives but... I just don't think I could use my hate for Dumbledore against you."

"That's... very kind of you." Lupin said from the other couch. "... I think."

"What would you do in my position Lupin?"

"Me? I'd probably run away, go to another country."

"You wouldn't try to stop what was going on?" Harry asked.

"I'm not a good fighter Harry. I can hold my own against a Death Eater, but I wouldn't have the courage needed to go against Dumbledore himself. Likewise, I could never bring myself to go after You-know-who by myself either."

Harry nodded.

"I'm not a good leader like you are."

Harry glanced at him.

"Why don't you take me to your place, you can hold me there however you want, and I'll give you a chance to prove to me that my life is the one that's fake.

"I know in my heart that I promised your parents to look after you, so I'll give you the benefit of the doubt."

Harry smiled at him.

"Just let me get some clothes at the very least."

The werewolf rose from the lounge and went to his room to grab some Lupin-esque clothes.

Harry snickered when all that returned was a wolf looking rather sheepish.

.o'OoOoO'o.

"DOGGIE!"

Lupin was assaulted by an overzealous vampire hugging him and just about choking him.

"Wait... that's not a doggy... You brought a werewolf before me?"

"That's not very nice." Harry replied. He couldn't help but treat her as a child. "This is a close friend of mine."

Harry brought Lupin to the study where Hermione was sleeping on the desk and Knight was engaging in light conversation with their resident 'granny' as he had so kindly put it.

"Baron, you're b-" Knight caught sight of the wolf behind him. "You were supposed to put him down, not bring him here!"

"It will be alright; I left the Dark Mark and put a glamour over a neighbour's dog. It should be real enough to fool everyone."

"You fool! The Dark Lord won't tolerate this kind of deception!"

Harry sighed. "I don't want to talk about it. This werewolf is the last friend my parents had. Not including Wormtail, but I kind of think that the point at which the Dark Lord stepped into my parent's place, he lost that honour."

"Where is the ruthless Baron Black that I trained all those months ago?" Knight lamented. "The one so determined to change the world that he'd lay his life down on the line!"

"Now you're so busy saving people that you're going to kill me instead!"

"Your occlumency shields are good enough. You won't get killed." Harry replied nonchalantly. "Besides, if you got killed, I would find the ruthlessness to avenge you for that I'm sure."

Knight grinned. "Heh, that's reassuring. I think I'd rather keep my skin if it's all the same to you."

Knight gestured for Harry to take a seat and poured a butterbeer from the keg he'd brought, sliding it to Harry.

"I do have some bad news though. Snape knew nothing. The Baroness kept him under the cruciatus for almost fifteen minutes."

Harry sighed. "He is a professional spy. Being in the Dark Lord's presence all the time, he'd have to be good at holding his shield. Having said that, if Dumbledore actually obliviated him afterwards, it's possible he doesn't even remember doing it."

"Well, he shouldn't remember the cruciatus. Minerva here obliviated him afterwards."

Harry scowled at her.

"I told you he wouldn't like it." Knight said noticing the look on his face.

"It was humane." She bristled. "That and the fact I'm sure you didn't want him reporting anything to Albus now did you."

Harry grumbled. "That's a valid point."

"Remus, if you're going to become human, couldn't you at least go somewhere where you can get dressed?" She said, looking past Harry.

"Ehhh... Harry has my clothes..."

Harry sighed and tossed them over his shoulder.

"Hermione?"

"Asleep."

Harry slouched. "I have no idea how we're supposed to create an antidote for a love potion we don't even know the name of..."

"There are three potions that do not even have antidotes. Surely you were paying attention to that in Professor Snape's classes."

"Chances are that he said it five seconds after removing ten points off Gryffindor for something unfair." Harry seethed. The problem was, one of them was the most likely for Dumbledore to have used.

"Thankfully, those only last a week."

Harry shook his head. "Dumbledore would want something more permanent than that. Any idea how we'd get rid of such a potion?" Harry asked.

"Off the top of my head, no." McGonagall replied, she looked purposefully at Knight.

"Do I look like the kind of guy who knows anything about love potions?"

Osfrid spoke once more. "Overpower it. Use a stronger potion keyed for each other."

"And what if the one applied is already the most powerful one?" Harry asked. "Or they interact?"

"I've watched you and Miss Granger creating spells Potter. I do not think it beyond her to improve on the best there is. As for interactions, I cannot predict at this point, not without knowing what the potion was, and not without knowing what you'll create. But I have no doubt in my mind that it will work."

Harry just hoped that they could come up with such a potion before the urge to see the one he loved became unbearable. He could only wonder how Hermione was feeling at this point.

It was odd to know that he still loved Hermione at an intellectual level. It was the emotional level that had been affected by it.

Harry was pretty sure that if he'd taken a full dose, the Barons Black would have had an all-out argument and that would have been the end of them.

Harry yawned. "We'll leave it until tomorrow I think, when we're all well rested. I feel like I haven't slept at all since last night."

Knight nodded and started to leave.

"I should probably get in contact with Wormtail at some point soon."

"Will you all be alright?" Harry asked McGonagall, the wolf and Cynwise.

With their nodding consent, Harry moved to his bedroom that he shared with Hermione and that's when he became aware of soft moaning from her side of the room.

Unable to resist himself, he glanced at her and saw her hand covering her womanhood, moving and groaning softly.

"Ohhh... Ronald."

Harry winced. 'That is one thing I never wanted to hear from her mouth...'

"Silencio."

Then tried his best to get to sleep.

.o'OoOoO'o.

The next few days after that could be described as unusual. Remus had threatened to leave the place once he was able to protest that he was living under the same roof as a vampire.

Harry argued that it was his fault for not telling him that Vampires and Werewolves didn't get along and ended up finalising the argument by telling him to live with it.

Days later, Harry would find Remus dictating a bedtime story to the vampire just before dawn.

Remus started to doubt his own sanity when he had the chance to speak to the sorting hat as it became quickly obvious to him that his life had been a lie.

Osfrid had imparted a bit of knowledge to Remus of his past experiences, mostly with the couple of times he and the marauders were always getting in Dumbledore's way with their pranks which made Remus grin wolfishly.

Apparently, James had stumbled across Dumbledore doing something a few times, but never escaped to tell anybody that could do anything about it, Osfrid being present for a few of those obliations itself.

McGonagall however, was not so happy to relive those days and out of everyone who came and went from the cave at various stages of the day, she was the biggest fish out of the water.

Having spent so many years as a teacher of Hogwarts doing transfiguration, there wasn't much she could do around the place.

Hermione and Harry did their best to keep her happy, but though they never told each other or anybody else, they'd both wished they'd killed her when they first took her away to make things easier on her.

Minerva was under the impression that Albus had been a good friend and mentor to her over the years. She could only imagine what would have happened if she had stumbled in Albus doing something. She too was probably not the person she would have been growing up naturally.

Cynwise kept to herself while she was awake, only allowing herself small conversations with anybody else, at least until Harry pulled her aside and gave her a stern talking to about alienating people, specifically Remus.

She had pouted, but done her best to be friendly to the werewolf more than anybody else and not it was not uncommon to see the werewolf playing 'horsy' for the childish vampire.

Hermione at one point had suggested that because she was turned at such a young age, her body had not matured and was still producing hormones at levels found in children.

It had all gone over Harry's head, but Hermione had angrily summed it up that her brain just could not mature.

Harry and Hermione spent all of their spare time researching love potions and trying to improve on the 'amortentia' love potion.

When they ran out of resources, they came to the conclusion it was time to raid Grimmauld place of all its books, a monstrous task in itself until Harry decided to try shrinking the whole room.

Not a task to be undertaken with a wand, Harry managed to take the entire library with him in his pocket, complete with the house's awful wallpaper and a couple of rather indignant paintings.

Although he never got to see it, the look on Molly Weasley's face was priceless when she went to the library to get a cookbook and found

that the room was literally missing and attempting to walk where the floor had once been left her hanging, feet through the roof of the living room.

This only left the problem for Harry of how to expand the whole thing when he got back.

Harry had thought to cut himself a new extension to the place to enlarge it in, but Remus said he'd take care of it and took off with the room and Professor McGonagall to see about retrieving its contents.

It was while McGonagall and Lupin were doing attempting to solve that problem that Hermione had turned up missing and while Harry had his suspicions where she had gone, he didn't want to dwell on it.

It was a good opportunity for Cynwise and her close friend the Sorting Hat to have a private word with him.

"Mister Black?" Harry raised his head from the scroll in front of him where he was scribbling down the effects of a few ingredients added together.

"Cynwise, I've told you... Just Harry."

"I... We want to ask you a favour."

Harry turned to face her and took the opportunity to clean his glasses.
"Anything, what is it?"

"We'd like for you to retrieve the star-crossed prophecy." The hat told him.

Harry's face flushed. 'The department of mysteries?'

"I don't like that favour, can I choose another one?"

"It is important that she knows."

"I know it is! But that's where Sirius died! Ask Hermione to do it!"

"Cynwise." The Hat said simply.

On order, the girl stepped to Harry and slapped him lightly across the face; which is to say, lightly for a vampire. It still sent Harry across the room. To which Cynwise apologised profusely.

Harry picked himself up and held his hand out aggressively.

"Do you think I haven't already considered which of you is better for the task?" The hat replied. "Yes, Sirius died. It hurt you a lot. It also hurt her a lot.

"But more than that, do you think she could go back there, knowing that she herself almost died there."

It took Harry a moment to register and remember the events of that night, but as clear as day, Harry knew that it was the truth. Sending Hermione there would be far worse than sending himself.

"I'm not asking you to go to that place again Harry. In fact, I'm telling you now, stay away from the dais. Just get the prophecy."

"She deserves to know Mister Black." Cynwise told him.

Harry nodded silently. "I'll do it tonight."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry apparated directly into the ministry foyer in full Black garb and already disillusioned.

There were still people bustling around the place at 7pm so he was quick to go straight down to the Department of Mysteries.

Struck by a sense of deja vu, it seemed like eternity since he was last here.

He stepped into the circular room. "Alright, now what?"

"Can I help you?" A man said from behind Harry. "We don't normally permit ghosts around here."

Harry turned to find a man who looked like his nose was slightly too far up his face and had a mouth far too wide. He was an odd person to behold.

"Imperio."

"I don't want to be messing around too much so take me to the prophecy room."

The captive man walked around the room three times and checked his watch, did a couple of sums on his fingers and then picked a door, leading straight to the prophecy room.

The prophecy chamber looked very clean. It was to be expected really as it was a couple of months shy from an entire year since the Battle here. It had probably been cleaned the following day; after all, they had shattered a lot of glass.

"The prophecy of the fifteen star-crossed." Harry started. "Is it here?"

"Why yes, yes it is." The man replied. "I think it was in row... Forty-two was it?" Harry followed the man as he led the way down the aisles.

Turning down the 42nd row, the man glanced at a few of the dusty labels and then decided it must have been the twenty-fourth row instead.

Harry grumbled, but followed him anyway.

"You're obviously not one of the star-crossed." The man commented as he turned down the row. "Here it is--"

Harry looked at the label.

(?) to (?)

The Last Dark Lord and the Fifteen star-crossed

"The Last Dark Lord?" Harry queried, looking at their strange-faced guide.

Harry reached for the orb. "You can't take--"

His hand wrapped around the orb and he removed it from the shelf.

"Got it. Thank you for your help," Harry said, as he waved his hand over the man and took the time to look at the small globe in his hand. "I'll have to ask you to keep this a secret till the day you turn to dust."

"I can do that." The man replied, not noticing that he was already looking a bit sandy and that bits of himself were already floating away in the draft that flowed through the room.

"That's good." Harry looked at what was left of the clay man and with all the sand in the air, sneezed, causing the man to crumble into a pile of dust on the ground.

"Achoo!" Harry sneezed again, "I've got to remember to use that spell when it's not going to get all in my face." Harry strode away from the dust before any more could get up his nose, ran up to the foyer and apparated away, nobody any the wiser.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry received a pleasant surprise when he got back to see that Remus and Minerva were busy putting away a large cache of books from their stash.

"You got it." He smiled. "How'd you manage?"

"Marauder secret." Remus winked. "Let's just say I've had experience with similar pranks."

McGonagall rolled her eyes. "He shrunk himself to get them out."

Harry smiled and placed the ball in his hand on the rim of the Sorting Hat who woke up from its slumber.

"I got it. Now we just need her."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Hermione didn't return for two days. It would be a nice surprise to see the number of books that now occupied their study.

Harry at one point had to extend the room in order to ensure they had room for more in the future.

While Harry never considered himself a master of potions at all, he and Remus together had made leaps and bounds at creating the most powerful love potion known to the wizarding world.

It would still take a full month to brew however.

At one point when going through the theory, Harry had an idea. Not a very nice idea, but as someone once said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. The question then was... who?

"It looks like this might not be as much a potion as a vapour." Remus mumbled. "The steam would be the effective part; drinking this thing... well... you don't want to drink anything with Skrewt urine."

"I'm not sure I want to smell it either." Harry retorted.

"Well, it's the best solution we've got so far, give or take the antlers."

Harry scratched his head and screwed up his face. "I'm not sure how anybody would take us seriously with those out of our head. I thought you fixed that with the bees wax."

"Yeah, I did, but the bees wax gets negated by the ox hairs."

"Put them in the other way around?" Harry joked.

"Harry, you want a Love potion, not a..." Remus did some scribbling. "Hmn, that might come in handy for me."

"Not a what?"

"Oh... nothing. We could really do with Hermione's help on this."

Harry sighed. "You're right. I should probably drag her away from Wonald. I don't think I trust her to come back of her own accord."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Upon using his portkey to get back to Hogwarts, Harry immediately walked out of the classroom and down the hallway. Knowing Hermione's current obsession, he guessed that she'd be wherever Ron was, or close by.

His first destination was the Gryffindor common room which contained some of the Gryffindor guys attempting to be macho and were flirting with Parvati and Lavender.

Having exhausted that idea, he moved to the quidditch pitch.

Unfortunately for Harry, the only person flying around the pitch was the one person that he himself didn't want to see.

Harry did take a moment to admit, Ginny was a pretty decent flyer.

A glint of gold appeared out the corner of his eye and Harry instinctively grabbed the snitch out of the air.

He laughed at his luck.

"You've missed me that much that you came to see me?" He asked the little ball.

"Harry!" Ginny's voice carried faintly.

'Shit!' Harry thought to himself.

"Where have you been?"

"I'll tell you later Ginny, I'm looking for your brother, have you seen him?"

"Library, you've got a test tomorrow you know."

"Hmn, thanks."

Harry surprised himself. He expected himself to turn into a stuttering flobberworm in front of her, but he didn't feel anything apart from the normal urge to keep clear.

It sure was amazing to hear that Ron was studying. Harry noted that that wasn't really fair though, Ron had to study now that Hermione wasn't around to read over his work.

"Oof!" Harry bumped into a girl rounding the corner and her books went flying everywhere.

"I'm sorry." Harry said as he pushed himself to his hands and knees and started collecting them.

"That's alright."

They each reached for the same book and Harry looked straight into the eyes of Susan Bones.

"S-Susan... I'm s-sorry."

"M-Me too." She replied, picking up the book and stacking it on top. "I'll try to be more careful in the future."

"Yeah, I should be too. Hahah," It was a pathetic laugh and Harry wondered why he was acting so stupidly.

Getting to her feet, Susan brushed herself off with her free hand and slowly started walking.

"Well... Harry... I'll, see you around I guess..."

Harry waved after her, a goofy grin plastered to his face.

He watched her go long after she had left his sight and then shook himself back to reality. He had to get Hermione so she could look at that stupid prophecy.

Harry found Hermione in the library, not studying with Ron as he'd expected her to be doing.

She was standing at a bookshelf, not reading a book, but peering in a hole in the bookshelf.

Harry looked around the corner of the shelf to see she was staring right at Ron who, much to Harry's surprise was studying.

"Don't tell me this is all you've been doing the last couple of days." He said kindly.

"Harry!" She squeaked softly. "What are you doing here?"

"We need your help." Harry told her.

"I'm not interested." She replied. "Go fawn over Ginny or something."

Harry sighed. "I don't want to fawn over Ginny." He replied. "Susan is just so much cuter... No, wait... I want things to go back to normal."

"Susan huh? Good for you, now go find her. I'm trying to figure out how I'm going to talk to him."

Harry looked around, and seeing nobody present, put his hand on her shoulder and activated his portkey, dragging her kicking and screaming to their cave.

.o'OoOoO'o.

"HARRY YOU INSENSITIVE BASTARD!" She screamed at him as she arrived. "Oooh! If I portkey back now, I'll have to walk all the way back to the library! He might be gone by then." She stamped her foot. "I hate you Harry Potter!"

"Oh," Harry said with a grin. "Well, if that's how you feel, I'll go and put your prophecy back in the department of mysteries."

"You have the prophecy? The original prophecy?" Hermione asked, her face lighting up. "Show it to me! I have to know!"

Harry grinned.

Upon leading Hermione into the study, she saw the number of books there and complimented everyone present.

"I'm glad you decided to come back Miss Granger." The professor said. "You have not been so distracted to have forgotten your studies have you?"

"Studies?" She asked.

"We've nailed out a better potion to counteract the current one, it just has some bugs in it still..."

"Or antlers as the case may be." Harry grinned.

Cynwise approached Hermione and knelt before her, her hands outstretched holding the prophecy in her hands.

"This rightfully belongs to you, Star-crossed Hermione Granger."

Hermione looked a bit stunned by the display of the vampire, but took the ball from her hands.

"Um, thanks. I don't suppose you know how to use it do you?"

"Apply some magic to it and identify yourself." She said.

Hermione let a loose flow of magic go into the ball, to which it glowed bright blue. "I am Hermione Granger,"

The ball continued to glow, but did nothing. "Umm, show me your prophecy..."

With a bright flare, an image hovered in front of her. An elderly lady with beads in her hair rasped, and her ghoulish voice echoed through the room.

As the world threatens to fall,
Between the monochrome hands,
Fifteen shall rise,
Marked with the promise of hope,
The star on their right ear,

The Last Dark Lord,
Cruel, defiant,
Ruthless, merciful,
He holds the key.

One's greatest happiness,
Chooses the form they shall take,
And decides the fate of the world.

Should they rise,
The world shall be torn asunder.

The world, will threaten to fall.

"Remus, did you get that?" Harry asked.

Lupin finished scratching on the desk a second later. "I got it."

"Merlin Harry, does that mean that... If Voldemort got his hands on me... He could control the world?"

Harry looked ill.

"I did tell you he was playing for far greater stakes than he realised." Osfrid said offhandedly. "Having said that, I think you have the wrong idea."

"In what way am I interpreting it wrong Osfrid?" Hermione snapped.

"Voldemort is not merciful.

"He believes he is, but I do not think that many others would agree with him." The hat replied.

"Then who?" Hermione asked. "Dumbledore?"

The hat burst out laughing and Cynwise smiled gently. "No silly.

"The only people who can retrieve a prophecy from their shelves are those involved. The one who retrieved it is the Last Dark Lord. Loosing either of the other star-crossed to Voldemort means nothing, it's Harry losing you that would give the world to Voldemort." She grinned like the child that stole the pie.

Harry held onto the table for support. "I-I'm not... I'm not a Dark Lord." Harry protested. "I can't be."

"Not now you're not, but the only thing you're missing is followers." The hat told him.

"When you're ready, I can help you get aide from the Vampires.

"Uncle Lupin will help with the werewolves."

"I will?" He asked, stunned.

"Uncle Knight will follow you."

"I will too." Minerva McGonagall announced.

Harry had a hard time believing what was being said. He looked at Hermione and saw a shadow of the compassion she once felt for him, a faint smile that told him that somewhere in her was the original love they felt.

Harry couldn't argue with them on account of the prophecies causing madness. He had to be involved.

"How long..." He gulped, fearing the question that was running through his mind. "How long have you suspected I was this Last Dark Lord of yours?" Harry asked the hat.

"Since the first time I looked into your mind." The hat told him. "The only thing that was missing I thought, was a streak of defiance; after all, nobody can defy the Headmaster unless they can sufficiently hide themselves away from him.

"There is only one way for a human to avoid being obliterated..."

"Ground vampire teeth, given willingly, infused directly into the bloodstream."

Harry looked at Cynwise who grinned toothily.

"Getting Poppy Pomfrey to put it in your bloodstream without our esteemed Headmaster knowing was the hard part."

"You guys really aren't going to believe me if I insist I'm not him... are you?"

"You are him Harry."

"BUT I DON'T WANT TO DESTROY THE WORLD!" Harry cried pathetically.

Author's note:

Between Assignments, seminars, dying video cards, blowing up CPUs, girlfriend getting a job and programming I haven't had much time to work on this story. To everyone who has been eagerly waiting updates or assumed the story was abandoned, my apologies.

I'm not going to make any promises on when the next chapter will be up, but if all goes well with my studies it won't be too long.

For those die-hard Harry/Hermione fans, you should know that the love potion stuff will be over with by about the middle of next chapter.

Chapter 09 - Before the Coming Darkness

The good thing about hearing a prophecy from the ball was that Dumbledore could not have tampered with it. It was definitely the real thing.

The bad thing about hearing the prophecy from the ball was that it was the real thing. Harry wished that Dumbledore had tampered with it just to make him feel bad.

"How can someone be the Last Dark Lord anyway?" He pondered to himself. "If I became a dark lord, some goodie two-shoes would rise up and kill me, then someone else would take my place and voila, new dark lord..." There really was no way to prevent them from rising without destroying the whole world, which Harry just wouldn't allow himself to do.

The sorting hat didn't reply. It hadn't said a word since that night.

He sighed. It was mind boggling trying to find a solution to a problem when you're not sure what the cause was.

There was one thing Harry was grateful for though, shortly after the prophecy and the collective silence of thought processes in action Hermione had glanced at their love potion efforts.

She pointed out that antlers would not be an issue with it if they added the gargoyle flakes after three minutes of stirring instead of two and a half. They'd obviously forgotten the basics of potions Hermione huffed.

"Honestly Remus, I thought you of all people could drum it into Harry. The only problem you'd have now if you go through the procedure again is that it would liquidate our livers. You can fix that with a fresh sprig of parsley though."

"You know, suddenly I feel like Aunt Petunia knew more than she was letting on when she told me that the day I forget to add Parsley to the soup would be the day I'd die."

Hermione flashed him an irritated look. "Well, I know for a fact Harry that without Snape sabotaging your potions you're able to do well, so I shall leave this in your capable hands. I am going to go and study for my exams." She said tartly. "You may not give a rat's arse, but when this is all over, I'm going to get myself a nice desk job and enjoy my life to the fullest."

"Sure," Harry grumbled. "And I'll bet it has absolutely nothing to do with Ron."

Hermione blushed and reached into her robe for her portkey. "I might see if I can get Ronald to agree to a game of wizarding chess with me."

"What? Hey wait!" Harry grumbled as she vanished and let out a frustrated sigh.

He wished he could understand what Hermione was going through. Even worse, he wished that he could feel the jealousy he knew he should be feeling.

Part of him wanted to go with her so he could see Susan. Instead, he'd do what the Baroness had left for him to do and just hoped that in four weeks when it was done brewing, he wouldn't feel the searing jealousy he wanted to be feeling.

He looked at the list of ingredients. Remus had Minerva already out collecting a couple of them.

Harry would need to get some of the rarer ingredients. He'd thought to raid Snape's private stash, but he knew well that the missing ingredients would be reported to the one person Harry wanted to stay one step ahead of.

No, the ingredients would need to come from somewhere else.

It was with an exaggerated sigh that Harry donned his Baron Black cloak and apparated to the Gringotts apparition point, a little way away from the bank. He wasn't wearing his mask anymore, but at this point he wasn't sure that he cared. Dumbledore knew without a doubt

who wore the cloaks so what was the point? Certainly not to hide from the two Aurors outside of the bank.

They looked at him and went wide-eyed. "Is that...? It can't be!"

Harry saw them reach for their wands and he allowed his aura to flare long enough to watch them crumble to the ground and start snoring.

Harry pretended to look surprised and poked one of them. "Are you alright?" He shrugged and kept walking as people looked at him.

Harry approached the goblins at the front Bench. The Goblin at the bench gave him an unusual look.

"Harry Potter, I'd like to use my vault." He showed his key.

The goblin nodded slowly and clicked his finger for one of the chauffeurs to attend to this client.

The goblin who took him down to his vault announced himself as Plotholes. "You'll have to forgive us Mister Potter." Plotholes said nervously, he wringing his hands as the cart plummeted into the darkness.

"I'm sure you're aware that the Ministry of Magic is attempting to repossess the contents of suspected Death Eaters. It is not something we goblins are keen on allowing to happen."

"No, I wasn't aware of that..." Harry flashed an angry look at the goblin. "You better not be telling me that you're taking me into a trap so help me..."

The goblin looked ashamed, but Harry couldn't see it for the lack of light in this part of the ride.

"It is not our trap sir, we do not approve of the Ministry stationing aurors inside of our walls. I am notifying you now in case you wish to decide against going to your vault as I could not well tell you out in the open."

"Take me there. I'll take care of any aurors and eject them from the premises for you." Harry said dangerously.

"Please... Baron Black... Do not spill any blood in our bank, or we will be forced to bring down our security teams on you."

Harry nodded. He had no experience with goblin magic, but if it was anything like house-elf magic, he was sure that they'd have a couple of surprises he'd be unprepared for.

Harry was nervous until the cart slowed to a halt. Outside of his vault were two humans wearing the auror uniform.

Harry raised an eyebrow at Plotholes who explained. "Gringotts bank respects the privacy of their patrons, but your ministry seems to think it can seize your assets because of an unproven status, however, they cannot get into your vault without your key."

"Baron Black, A.K.A. Harry James Potter." The left auror said. "You are accused of being a Death Eater and are a known mass murderer. You are under arrest, come quietly or we'll have to resort to suppression magic."

Harry blinked. "There is only two of you?" He asked them in surprise. He had kind of expected an army or something then mentally berated himself for being cocky. "I'm sure that the goblins don't approve of your being here. I suggest you leave." He looked at Plotholes.

"No sir. They are not welcome here, for arresting or stealing from our clients."

"Why you little bas-"

Harry raised his wand and petrified both men, taking them completely by surprise. "Then I would like to conclude my business here in peace and I shall deal with this mess outside of your office."

"Th-Thank you sir."

The door opened revealing Harry's trove of money and other assortments. It had grown since he had last looked in here with everything carefully arranged and sorted, money to one side, books and paperwork to another, and to Harry's interest, a large cache of weapons that he could only assume had come from his inheritance from Sirius.

Harry sniffed and tried not to think about him. He reached out to grab an exotically styled sheath and then decided against it. Who knew what things the Blacks kept?

"Do you guys keep a... a catalogue... or something of what's in here? Or rather, something that can tell me what artefacts are dangerous and which aren't?"

The goblin snapped his fingers and handed him a scroll.

Harry went through the scroll and was pleased to find that not only did it explicitly state which of the weapons and amulets were cursed but also gave short descriptions of what abilities if any, each item had.

It was a relief he'd thought about the possibility of curses; the sword he had reached for was cursed for bad luck, which was the last thing he needed at the moment.

Harry further perused the list until he found listed amongst the amulets a plain ring. It had no benefits or curses on it, but it was, if nothing, beautiful. With five diamonds and a ruby Harry immediately thought of Susan.

He slapped himself and grabbed the ring. While his thoughts skimmed the idea of what it would be like to propose to her, Harry knew that the person whose hand it would be on would be the one his intellect loved.

Which reminded him, he needed to get cracking on that potion. It would take weeks to go thoroughly through the book lists and the rest of the artefacts in the vault.

Harry picked out a less ornate sword which was charmed to not make any sound and had an invisible sheath; it was one of the few cursed weapons he had perused.

With no idea how much his potion ingredients would cost, Harry dug his hands into the galleons and shifted a pile aside the height of his knees.

"There has to be a way I can carry this conveniently..." He muttered to himself as he shook his head.

"Most wizards use their House Elves and make an agreement with the bank to allow them access into the vault. I shall call him." The goblin closed its eyes for a moment.

"But I don't have a- Dobby?" Harry stared at the elf in disbelief. "You came? But that means..! Oh man... Hermione is soooo going to kill me."

"Dobby wanted to be Harry Potter sir's elf." The elf said proudly. "Dobby did not think that sir could trust anybody else with his secrets."

Harry ran his hands through his head in frustration.

"Aragh! All right! Plot holes, set Dobby up with an account here and give him say 10 galleons a month."

"But sir!" Dobby protested. Harry glared at the elf who wisely shut up. "Dobby is sorry sir. Dobby has been without a master for so long he forgot his place. Dobby shall punish himself." He reached for a large spiked mace and Harry panicked.

"NO! You stupid elf! If you punish yourself I'll dock your pay for a month!" He threatened.

Dobby looked confused, he had gotten an allowance he didn't want, and then his master was threatening to take it away? That was confusing. So he did the only thing he could think of. He burst out crying.

Meanwhile, the goblin assigned to cater to Harry Potter's needs looked on in sheer disbelief.

"Come on Dobby, If you can take money from my vault, then I need your help with my shopping."

"DAMN YOU BARON!" Someone screamed from outside of his vault.

Harry gestured for everyone to leave his vault, and once they were outside, the goblin locked it again and handed the key back to its rightful owner.

"You won't get away with this!" One of the aurors yelled at him.

"Oh, you managed to free your head." Harry mused. "You must be stronger than I thought. But I'm not quite sure I understand what you're talking about; I'm just doing a bit of banking, I'm not allowed get away with that?" He smiled and recast the petrification charm on him and levitated them to the cart where they rode back to the surface.

Exiting the bank, Harry had many people giving him a cautious eye as he levitated the two aurors behind him and organised for Dobby to have access to his vault.

As Harry walked out of the bank, he was met by a fleet of twenty aurors, including the two whom he'd put to sleep earlier.

"Dobby, why don't you wait for me over by the ice cream shop." He said grimly and wished that Hermione was here. It would be a tough battle if any of them were hit-wizards or witches.

"Harry Potter, you're under arrest for mass murder, if you resist-"

Harry fired a stunner at the man who blocked it with a shield. "These two told me exactly the same thing. I don't need to hear it twice."

"Men, lethal force has been authorised, take him down!" The Sargent called.

Instead of blocking the reductos with a shield, Harry flicked his wand in a circle and blocked them with one of his two captives.

Bystanders screamed and started running everywhere.

The human-shield's back opened from the destructive spell, causing massive damage to every organ below his lungs.

With another flick, Harry sent the other body straight at the other aurors knocking a couple over and distracting them long enough to dart to one side and disillusion himself.

"Where'd he go? Banks! You can see auras! Where is he?" The man screamed as Harry ran him through with a disillusioned sword.

"I can't see him!" The one named Banks screamed in a panic as the man next to him had his head fall off to the ground.

Banks fired a stunner which missed his target and stunned his own team mate.

"Friendly fire!" Someone yelled as Harry brought his sword down the middle of another man.

"Do something!"

"ARAGH!"

"I'm getting out of here!" Someone yelled.

Harry let him run and swung his sword around to the person two his side but instead heard a clang as his sword hit twin daggers and a young woman not in auror uniform looked directly at him.

"What took you so long?" The Sargent cried.

"I was hoping to gauge mein enemy before I fought wit him." She said in broken english. She sounded German to Harry, but he wasn't sure.

"He is quite young, but possesses invisibility better than a thestral." She quipped while holding Harry at bay as he pushed against her. "Too bad for you that I have seen the deaths of many bad men at the hands of these blades, their kind of invisibility does not work for them or you."

Harry stepped back, but kept his sword trained on her.

She followed his movements despite his invisibility.

Harry found himself dodging random attacks from the aurors as they tracked him through her.

After the third shot, Harry got pissed off and swung at one of the offending Aurors only to find his sword engaged in the lady's daggers again.

His eyes flicked to where she had been a second ago.

'This is no ordinary auror.' Harry mused.

"Not bad." Harry mused, wondering how he could defeat her as he shielded himself from a bone-breaker. "You're not one to play fair are you?" Harry asked her.

"Says the one who would attack others invisibly."

"Twenty against one? It seemed to me like you were being more unfair than I was." Harry mused.

Harry's aura flared as he cast an avada kedavra at the woman which she apparated away from and it struck the auror Harry had originally aimed for.

Harry spun around and brought his blade to meet hers, thankful that he'd felt her presence. She was quick.

Harry twisted his blade and poked at her, she dodged to one side, but got cut by his blade and as she hissed, Harry fired another two killing curses at the aurors.

Upon seeing the killing curse bringing down the law enforcement agency, the assassin got angry and started swinging her twin daggers at Harry who had a hard time keeping them away from him and found himself cut a couple of times. He had tried to apparate away a few times but there were apparition wards firmly in place, which made Harry wonder how in the world the lady had managed to seemingly disappear from one place and appear in another.

Not seeing any other option, Harry allowed his aura to flare to full strength, blinding everyone present, and yet still his blade missed its mark.

With his magic fully released, Harry was able to cast a circle of fire around him which expanded like a tidal wave and burned the remaining aurors alive. His main target however disappeared from him as he cast the spell and appeared within the ring as it expanded away from him.

She scowled at him at attacked anew. She was angry enough to be a highly dangerous opponent, but well trained enough to control it to the point that she wasn't leaving holes in her stance which annoyed Harry who switched appropriately to a mix between physical and magical attacks.

The careless use of magic caused much destruction in and around Diagon Alley, Madam Malkins was completely levelled, Flourish and Blotts had minor damage to the front and Ollivander was not looking impressed at all as he stood outside of his shop surveying the damage and eventually casting a large shield in front of the building.

Harry fired a reducto at the woman which she dodged and the spell went flying straight into the one place that Harry didn't want to hit: the apothecary.

With all of the volatile ingredients shattering, exploding and mixing, there was an almighty explosion that rocked Diagon Alley and probably outside to London as well.

The young wizard didn't have any time to mentally berate himself for being so stupid and instead blocked another attack by his assailant.

He swung down, pushing her back and she fired an expelleramus at him.

Harry noticed that when she went out of the way to attack magically she wasn't very strong. Her aura was mediocre at best. Which made him think about the equations Hermione had laid out for him on a very simple first year spell which they both made a lot of use of, and no wonder as it worked a charm almost every time.

Accio Eyeballs.

The woman screamed as her body parts resisted the call of such a powerful wizard. Harry had to be five times more powerful than someone to summon an integral part of their body. Thankfully, the witch was little more powerful than she was letting on and after a second or two of struggling, they flew out of her head leaving a crack as the nerves snapped.

Unable to fight anymore, she put her hands to her head and made an ungodly racket as she wailed.

Harry had a good mind to leave her like that, but considered the location he was in and the look of disbelief on the few people that had stayed.

With a whip of his sword, her head fell from her shoulders and the anti-apparition field dispersed.

Bystanders looked shocked for a second and there was nothing but silence. Then as Harry looked around the place and surveyed the damage, people screamed and started running.

Harry picked up the assassin's head by its hair and walked to the ice cream parlour where his faithful house-elf stood.

"Dobby, could you find somewhere safe for these while I finish my shopping?" He said as he handed the head and the eyeballs to the elf

who looked as though he'd rather tame a dragon, but didn't dare argue.

As Dobby went off to do that Harry approached Ollivander who was eyeing him very cautiously.

"I don't think I shall be selling any more phoenix feather wands. It seems that everyone who uses one is destined to be murderers." He said rather venomously to Harry. "Your magical prowess is every bit as great as I had thought it would be, but I had hoped to see you using it to bring down dark wizards rather than being one yourself."

"If you're talking about Voldemort then that depends entirely on him." Harry replied. "But believe me, I am working on taking down a Dark Lord."

"Your judgement is clouded. There is no wizard darker than He-who-must-not-be-named."

"Perhaps it is your judgement that is clouded. The real enemy hides in broad daylight." Harry said cryptically. "I remember someone once telling me 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend.'"

Harry just grinned at the old man and raised his wand. "Reparo."

His shop flew together as if it were brand new again.

With a few more waves, Harry had managed to repair all of the buildings except for the apothecary and the buildings directly surrounding it. The dangerous mix of potions that had caused the explosion made the building irreparable.

That and the fact that the store owner was dead anyway.

It was a very frustrated man in a dementor cloak who lightly gripped his house-elf by the arm and apparated back to his home in Norway.

.o'OoOoO'o.

As Harry took off his cloak and hung it up, he surveyed his body. He'd have a few extra scars to sport after today.

At seeing him bleeding on the floor, McGonagall freaked. Harry waved it off insisting he'd had worse and that he wasn't hurt anywhere vital.

Deep down, Harry was seething that Hermione had left him to such a dangerous situation just so she could go leer at Ron. But then again, she had no way of knowing that Harry was walking into such a predicament in the first place.

Still. Now Harry had to find a different place to get potions ingredients.

There was an apothecary in Hogsmeade, but if Harry were to go there, he may as well steal stuff off of Snape and visit Susan at the same time.

'No.' He told himself as he bandaged his wounds. He'd need to find one away from Dumbledore, probably in Ireland or Bugaria or something.

Wormtail would probably be a good source for such information.

Harry had figured out that the rat was a weakling and prone to running at the first hint of danger, but he wasn't stupid. He was Voldemort's head of intelligence which meant he would probably know who the assassin was too.

After indulging his ex-teacher's curiosity and letting her know what had transpired, she had tsked and commented that it was about time Remus brushed up on his rusty potions and started making salves for repairing minor cuts.

The Baron informed his house-elf that after paying a visit to the Dark Lord, he'd go straight to wherever it was he was getting ingredients from. Dobby indicated he could follow Harry, all he needed to do was call on him.

With that sorted, Harry politely asked Dobby to retrieve the things he'd asked put away and retrospectively hoped that Dobby could get back, but as it would be, Dobby could apparate directly to Harry as his master.

After having the pleasure of seeing McGonagall scream at the sight of a head still dripping with blood, tongue sticking out and both eyes held by the nerves by the house elf, Harry grabbed the 'items' and apparated to Voldemort's lair.

.o'OoOoO'o.

It was rare that Harry showed his face around the Dark Lord's abode.

To say it was bustling with activity probably wouldn't be correct. It was more active than an average mansion, but less busy than the ministry of magic.

The first person that Harry recognised was Lucius Malfoy, who snobbed him off completely. This suited Harry fine as he had no respect and had no desire to speak to the elder Malfoy.

The second person however was a lot more helpful. Bellatrix LeStrange, together with her husband Rudolphus looked disdainfully at Harry until the matriarch of the family noticed what Harry was carrying around the place and suddenly she was grinning like a four-year old who had found a new friend to play with.

When she asked who it was, Harry shrugged. "That's what I'm trying to find out. I was thinking Wormtail might know."

"Through that door, then past the next three doors you'll find a study on the right." Rudolphus replied as he stared in disgust at the head.

As Harry walked off, he distinctly heard him accuse Bellatrix of cheating on him for the Dark Lord all those years ago.

Harry smiled and shook his head in silent laughter.

Approaching the study he was directed to he noticed that Wormtail was rattling off plans to the Dark Lord.

Harry didn't even knock as the Dark Lord seemed to notice his presence before he even had a chance to knock on the door.

Seeing his master's inattention, Wormtail turned to look at the Baron Black.

"Baron Black." Voldemort said as warmly as a cruel person as him could say. "To what do I owe this... pleasure? You're bleeding on my carpet and floor." He said disapprovingly.

"Sorry my lord." Harry said. "I'll be scourgifying everything on my way out."

"No need, you provided more than enough slaves to do the job for you." Voldemort said simply.

"I had been given reports that you were attacked in Diagon Alley. I see you made it out with four limbs attached."

"Yes my Lord." Harry replied as he walked to Wormtail and placed the head on his desk. "Any idea who this is?"

Wormtail looked at the head and took one of the eyeballs to line up with her eye sockets.

"Looks like it might have been Berthilde Winestock." Wormtail mused. "One of Germany's best assassins. They sent her after you?"

"Be honoured, they really want you dead."

"Really? Is that so?" Harry deadpanned.

"It seems you have lost your anonymity." The Dark Lord replied. "The ministry have put two and two together and put out a warrant for your arrest."

"I got into a firefight with Dumbledore a couple of weeks ago. He already knew who I was by that point so I don't care. Let them come after me; they're eighteen aurors and one assassin down short and I'm still here."

Voldemort grinned.

"Look, I kinda blew up the apothecary in Diagon Alley so I'm kind of in need for a new one, I figured you of all people would know Wormtail."

Wormtail scratched down an address on a piece of parchment. The address was a place in Norway but Wormtail informed him that he got a lot business through the Dark Lord, so he was no stranger to English.

Harry thanked him and bowed to the Dark Lord.

"I want that head." Voldemort said as Harry reached for it. "It will serve as a nice trophy to have planted in the middle of the ministry."

"And while you're here, Wormtail, give him that mission we've been planning for him."

Harry looked at the sheet of parchment that the ratty person handed him. "Erskine Barracks, Wilton?" The address meant nothing to him.

"English military major Headquarters."

Harry went pale. "You want me to lead a strike against the British military?"

"Unlike your last mission Baron, I want no survivors. I shall expect the baroness to participate. She has had enough time to mourn."

'Not that she's spent any time mourning at all...' Harry thought to himself. "Surely you don't expect us to go alone?"

"Of course not." Wormtail replied. "I am assigning you Fenrir Greyback and a pack of ninety werewolves."

"You cannot fail this mission Baron or I will use you in my experiments with pain." The Dark Lord told him.

"The attack will commence on the 27th of May, just after the Hogwarts exams."

Harry nodded.

"I want it to be a day to be remembered Baron Black." Voldemort said. "Wormtail here will have all your papers and plans in order, which gives you about a month to plan things. I want you to work very closely with Wormtail on this one. In two weeks, you will be introduced to Fenrir.

"You may go."

Harry nodded and left silently, his mind reeling. 'Holy shit... as if I'm going to wipe out the United Kingdom's military headquarters.' He thought in a panic as he apparated away to the potions apothecary.

.o'OoOoO'o.

The place was huge. It was a one-stop-shop for everything potions, from household herbs to dragons blood to gold plated cauldrons with bronze handles in fourteen sizes and shapes.

The man at the counter was a short wizard that looked like all he wanted for Christmas was two gold front teeth, and got it. He was balding, but sported an unusual trait that where most men suffered from receding hairlines, he was thinning at the back of his head and grew hairier in his fringe; the general effect, he looked like he was wearing a mullet backwards.

"You look like one of them." He said with a slight Norse accent. "What do you want? I'll warn you I charge extra for dealing with your types."

Harry approached him and placed an ingredient and equipment list on the bench.

"That's going to cost a pretty penny Mister. I assume you can afford all of that."

"Dobby." Harry called, causing the elf to appear. "Make sure this man gets what he needs."

As the man browsed around the shop getting items that Harry needed, Harry perused the contents of the store and found himself picking out a few bits and pieces and adding them to the growing stack on the bench.

He had no idea why he was grabbing the ingredients, they were all used in the potion that the Hat had given them a while back.

There was a power gap between He and Dumbledore, Harry surmised that it was roughly the same gap between himself and Voldemort, though he had never tried fighting Voldemort to the point where he needed to stop toying with the younger wizard to hold his own.

Like it or not, they needed something to lower the difference between them.

He had very mixed feelings about the ritual. On one side of the coin, Harry did want to be a father, but he wanted to make sure that both he and his child's mother were still alive to raise it.

And on the other side was Dumbledore. He couldn't allow his child to fall prey to the older man's machinations, or Voldemort's either for that matter.

Harry knew for a fact that if he had a child with Hermione, one of the star-crossed, both parties would be interested in it.

But could he hide the child away from both? The fact was that neither Dumbledore nor Voldemort knew where their home was. It was well hidden from their presence. He knew from texts and Hermione's explanations that if she were to die, the secret would not become public knowledge. Only those who knew the secret would be able to

get to the place and they would not be able to divulge the secret any further.

So perhaps, Harry contemplated silently as he held a bottle of agueramenti leaves, they could keep a baby in the cave where nobody could get to it. Harry smiled wryly at the similarities between what his parents had done. The biggest difference in this instance however is that Hermione was the secret keeper, not one of their friends.

There were flaws in the idea, but he'd run them past Hermione. After he'd fixed the both of them up the way they should be.

It still took a little while longer before the store owner had everything organised. Speaking quickly with Dobby, the elf clicked his fingers and about ten handfuls of galleons appeared on the desk.

At the last minute, Harry grabbed a flagon of Wolfsbane potion for Remus and added it to the pile.

With the transaction completed, Harry finally felt like he was getting somewhere and was ready to start on the stupid potion he hoped would give one more defiance against Dumbledore.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry was as careful as one could be making the potion. There were a couple of stages where the potion was potentially prone to explosion.

There were times that Harry had to leave the cauldron simmering. These times were often spent sitting in his study either actively working on new curses or worrying over whether Hermione was alright. He hoped that she was spending most of her time studying instead of pining over 'Ronald' as she'd taken to calling him. It had been three days since he'd last seen her.

"Master...?" Harry put his book down and glared at his immature room-mate.

"Don't call me that Cynwise."

"Nuh uh! That's my new name for you!"

She was frustrating when she got like this. Remus had the same problem with her when she decided to nickname him Bubbles after she'd caught him drooling in his sleep four nights earlier. Having still not managed to shake her off of it, Harry wondered what the chances of him being able to achieve a different result was.

"If you call me that I'll line your coffin with Garlic."

She giggled. "Silly Masty, I know how to banish Garlic!"

"Then how about I sink it in the middle of the Hogwarts Lake?"

"I'll go there and use accio on it." She said, rising to the challenge.

"I'll nickname you 'tooth-fairy'." Harry said with an evil grin.

Her eyes teared up and a few seconds later, she was bawling like a kid who just had their candy taken off of them.

"Harold James Potter!" Came a stern voice from out in the training room. "What are you doing to the poor girl?"

"He-He," The girlfriend sniffed. "He was gonna call me 'tooth-fairy'!" She wailed.

"Really Mister Potter, I would have thought you'd be more sensitive than that!" McGonagall huffed.

"Well, she's insisting on calling me 'Master'" Harry retorted.

"Sticks and Stones Potter, Sticks and Stones."

"Bah!" Harry threw up his hands and left to check on his potion.

It was a good thing that he did too as he figured he had the heat up too high. Recasting the charm on the hearth, Harry stirred the potion

gently four times while wondering what it was with Cynwise. Sometimes she said the most intelligent things, and other times she just wanted to play.

For some reason he was suddenly reminded of Luna. Harry genuinely felt sorry for she, who just knew something was wrong, but was completely and utterly unable to do anything about it.

He and Hermione had spent many long nights trying to figure out how they could make her, and further than that, everybody immune from obliations to no success.

"But then again..." He murmured. The truth of it was revealed the night of the prophecy. There was one way that she would be rendered immune from obliations, but it would come at the cost of her humanity and ability to use wizarding magic.

Vampires had their own brand of magic that was very limited in comparison to wizards.

He would ask Cynwise in one of her more intelligent moments about her opinion about it. He really had no idea about what exactly happens with turned vampires short of what Lupin had taught them in their Defence classes.

Harry glanced over to his instructions. He just needed to add in the ground fawn hoof and then he could let it simmer for two weeks.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Dumbledore moved invisibly through his castle, his home, observing the students. He had plans for a lot of the students. Burt Sludgie was a second year student, highly intelligent and willing to walk over his friends to achieve something. He was going to be the future Minister of Magic.

When Dumbledore planned people's lives, he did so with their strengths and weaknesses in mind. People like Burt were easy to control and didn't need to be obliated so often to keep them in line.

Then there were genuine troublemakers like Luna Lovegood. Lately she had taken to giving him warnings that it was all going to end soon.

It was only to be expected though. She was an anomaly as much in this world as from the world she came from, the daughter of a spirit who loved a man so much that her love took a physical form for one night.

Yet, though she was born a spirit, her daughter 'outgrew' the spirit world and ended up gaining a real physical body of a human. An error in the universe, that's what she was.

Ultimately though, he was trying to find a place for her in his world as he wasn't particularly fond of killing people. It was a practice that his phoenix had a particular aversion to, and every time he killed someone, his phoenix would disappear for weeks on end. He deeply missed Fawkes.

Dumbledore stopped to look in on the library.

There was one student he had horribly mixed feelings about. Hermione Granger sat behind a mountain of books. She had demonstrated an immense amount of power not so long ago that he had to control. He had the philosopher stone to keep him alive, but there was the possibility of that being stolen. Miss Granger, together with the other two star crossed would be powerful enough to grant him the immortality needed to ensure that the Britain stayed within his parameters.

The elderly man knew she was trying desperately to keep up with her school work. She hadn't left the castle for days which meant that his plan, for the most part had helped, while she wasn't studying, she was seen staring dreamily or actively watching Ronald Weasley, who Dumbledore had decided would be a low level auror.

He was originally destined to be head of the MLE, but since he was forced to use the red-head as damage control for his second-most volatile student he couldn't afford to put him in a position of any kind of responsibility.

With her grounded, it meant that she would stay clear of killing off his aurors and mercenaries.

Voldemort was planning something, he was sure of that. More than likely a frontal assault on the Ministry, but anybody who knew anything about the attack was out of his reach; his probing of known Death Eaters in the school had yielded nothing of use.

"Excuse me, you're in my way."

Dumbledore looked in surprise as he turned to see his biggest source of headaches in recent times standing behind him.

"Mister Potter. I see you have come to grace us with your presence." He replied, removing his disillusionment and wondering exactly how long ago Harry had been able to see auras. It was hardly surprising when he considered the level of power that the boy had attained, but his ability make himself completely invisible was in itself a curious ability.

"Exams are getting close and I'm rather behind." Harry told him rather neutrally. "I don't particularly want to repeat this year."

"I see, and are you planning on bringing back my Transfiguration teacher?"

"She's dead." Harry told him without missing a beat.

Dumbledore grimaced. "When will you learn Harry that death and destruction achieve nothing? It's most infuriating replacing people when I have plans for them all."

"My apologies for disturbing your way of life." Harry said sourly. "Now, if you're not going to attempt to kill me yourself, I would like to do some study."

"Very well, but there is one thing I would like."

Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Accio portkey."

Harry felt a tug from his pocket and he could have whistled to think that Dumbledore could summon something without knowing what it specifically was.

The golden galleon Harry had given out for his DA last year flew from his pocket.

Harry however let loose a wandless obliterating spell at it.

The quick spell intercepted the coin on its way to the old man and caused it to explode flinging tiny shards of metal everywhere.

"That is good enough for me." The old man said. He really didn't care where they were hiding as long as he stayed within his view.

As Dumbledore stepped past him, he disillusioned himself and kept walking off in the direction of the great hall.

'How stupid does he think I am?' Harry grumbled as he pulled a brand new quill out of his bag and turned that into a portkey instead and then promptly entered the library.

Harry pulled a rather new looking book off of one of the shelves and sat down next to Hermione and made a point to start reading whatever was written on page 103. Harry read four lines and then had a look at the cover of the book and continued reading again. He wasn't sure if he cared about Willy, the wizard who lost his beard to a charmed lawnmower. Though he was mildly curious as to how he managed to write a four hundred page book on the incident.

After a few minutes of silent reading, Harry heard an acidic voice saying "Yes Harry?"

"It's brewing." He told her.

"That's nice." She said as she scribbled something down and left another awkward silence.

"I found a way to make Luna immune." Harry said softly.

That caught her interest.

"Cynwise says that she'll make her a vampire if both parties agree."

"I suppose you're planning on abducting her then and bringing her to the cave then?"

Harry nodded.

"Why don't you just invite Dumbledore too while you're at it." She hissed.

"It would be nice if you showed up every now and then." He hissed angrily. "We have something to do, just after exams. The last one was nothing compared to this."

Leaving the argument at that, Harry left the Hermione and the book and went to find Luna.

Hermione hated that she couldn't control her emotions around him. She always felt like she was a bitch after he walked away and that was the main reason she hadn't returned home.

Took a look at the clock on the library's wall and neatly packed up her books and placed them on the return trolley before heading down to the one place that nobody would find her; especially Ron.

She loved him very much, but she couldn't control herself around him and she had inadvertently divulged some information which she wished nobody would know. Most importantly, she had told Ronald in great detail how she went about increasing her power without a sacrifice.

If she didn't do something, it was only a matter of time before he asked her about her ability to become completely invisible, and she would be unable to resist those eyes.

She had taken note of Harry and Remus' enhanced love potion and with the help of some psychoanalysis on herself and a few diagnostic charms, managed to narrow the list of love potions from thirty seven to two. The bad news was that she had spent a lot of time going over the ingredients and managed to ascertain that one of them would be fatal if taken with the modified Amortentia. The good news was, out of the two of them, that was the only one with an antidote, which was precisely what she had brewing in the chamber of secrets.

If it worked, Harry's potion wouldn't be needed after all. But if it didn't, then it would be a while before she and he could talk without arguing.

She would find out in around an hour.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry was lucky in that when he brought Luna before Cynwise, the vampire was in 'Adult' mode. She took her meeting with Luna very seriously.

It was no surprise really when she had informed him that turning someone essentially made them slaves until they learned proper etiquette and earned the right to walk on their own two legs.

Despite the thousand years or thereabouts of her existence, she had been hesitant to ever take a minion of her own, though she had been drilled ostensibly about it when she had been turned herself.

It was an important moment in her life that meant her maturing as a Vampire.

Having said that, the first impression of Luna was not good.

The girl in question had been completely ecstatic about becoming a vampire and insisted that she dress up for meeting the one who would help her.

It was then that Harry realised that Luna really was three sultanas short of a fruitcake.

She was dressed in bright a bright red shirt with florescent green pants, topped with a yellow robe that flashed in blue writing "Beware of the Ministry's machinations." and then listed random accusations of the Ministry's activities.

She would not change insisting that this was the best she had.

Cynwise raised an eyebrow in question to her attire. She herself was wearing an elaborate black dress which she had bought especially for the occasion.

Harry had been surprised to learn that it was expected of her that even a vampire taking their first minion was expected to give the impression that they had more. They were to dress as masters.

"You're very colourful." Was all she said.

"Thank you your highness. I'm sorry for your loss."

Harry could have slapped his head but Cynwise laughed. "I'm not a princess dummy."

"And nobody has died." Harry added.

"Please Master." Cynwise told him. "This is between her and I." If it were any other occasion, Harry might have teased her, but seeing the deadly serious look on her face, he could tell that she was taking this very seriously.

"My master has told me that you were looking for an escape from being obliterated."

Luna nodded enthusiastically. "Yes. I tend to get very confused when the headmaster does that. I would very much like to be able to keep my own thoughts."

"Are you aware of the price that you're asking for?"

Luna stared at her and said nothing. She was like an owl.

"Do you know what I am?" The little girl asked her.

"You're a vampire. Cynwise deBeau-Gryffindor, born in 1123, became a vampire in 1129 when you were dragged into the war between the Gryffindors and Slytherin lines. After being held hostage by Slytherin he handed you over to his Vampire friends to kill you and instead they turned you into one of them. You've never made anyone else a vampire yourself, and you were imprisoned under orders of the Headmaster a hundred and twenty five years ago."

Cynwise looked very grave. "I'm rather surprised you know so much about me."

"The voices tell me things." Luna said airily.

"So you know exactly who I am. Vampires are the only creatures who cannot be obliterated. If you want to be immune to them, I can make you one, but you must understand the consequences.

"You will lose your ability to perform magic as you know it, though I can teach you our own flavour. You will become a hated creature by wizards and you forfeit any right to live amongst them.

"Vampires crave the blood of the living. It is the only thing that can give you the strength to walk on two feet.

"Lastly, until you are freed, you live to serve me. You literally will not be able to disobey me. If I tell you to play horsey, you will."

"I don't mind." Luna said. "As long as I may continue my search for the crumple-horned Snorkack in my spare time."

Harry groaned.

Cynwise looked confused.

"There's a family of them are living on the next range over." She said simply.

Luna looked absolutely delighted and was just starting to babble about it when Harry decided it was a good time to make an escape. The last thing he wanted was to hear two people going on about them.

Harry instead decided to check over the potion and after a while, he'd continue going over the papers for the attack on the British military.

The job scared the crap out of Harry, he wasn't afraid to admit to anybody.

Knight sure as hell didn't like the idea of the attack.

When Harry voiced his concern at being able to block a bullet, Knight said he had an SA80 to try him out with. He'd never tried pointing it at a wizard. Though nervous, Harry agreed to the testing.

Harry was not able to block bullets entirely, but his shield was strong enough that they were slowed to the point of it feeling like being stung by a bee.

It was enough for him, but he worried about Hermione. Her shields weren't as strong as his so she might not be able to stop a bullet from embedding itself in her. There was no question, they definitely needed better shields.

A scream echoed from the front annex where Harry had left Cynwise and Luna. He hoped that it was Luna's way of getting what she wanted and not Hermione interrupting something.

"That... sounded painful." Knight commented.

"I'm sure they heard that over at the nearest town." Harry muttered.

"It never seems to be a dull moment over here any more." Knight said with a smile. "While I think of it, Wormtail asked me to pass along some news he thought you'd find interesting, but do take it with a grain of salt."

"Wormtail?"

"Your star-crossed girlfriend's parents were kissed by dementors right?"

Harry bit back a snap about Hermione not being his girlfriend. "That's what that warden said."

"According to a headcount of the dementors in the Dark Lord's service, there are no dementors working with the ministry. Every one of them left Azkaban to join him over a year ago."

"Really? So their death order was faked?"

"All I'm saying is that it may be faked, or perhaps it was just the cause was faked."

Harry nodded and wondered if he should tell Hermione. It might give her a false hope.

After a few more tests of Harry's shield, they were ready to give up on the regular protego. It was time to try something different.

Harry was about to start picking the protego apart to see how it worked when he heard the sound of movement from the corridor and looked up to see Cynwise looking like she'd overdosed on something. Once Harry realised she had shining fresh blood drenching her black dress, smearing her mouth and running down her neck it was obvious what she'd overdosed on.

She had in one hand a bloodied sword of Gryffindor and in her other hand was Luna's wrist that she was dragging unceremoniously across the floor towards her coffin in the study.

"That was disturbing." Knight said, looking pale.

Harry nodded. He'd seen Cynwise pettily wipe her mouth of blood after drawing blood from himself, but never had she brought herself before him completely splattered with it.

"It's easy to forget she's a vampire until you see something like that." Harry said and then plugged his ears as McGonagall, in the study shrieked.

If she wasn't a cat animagus, Harry would have thought his transfiguration teacher was scared of even mice; the amount she spent screaming.

"Let's get back to this shield."

Knight nodded. "I think the problem is that protego is designed to stop spells. They are slow in comparison to a speeding bullet."

Harry nodded. "Reckon a thicker shield would do it?"

"Well, I failed arithmancy at school, but it looks to me like the protego spell is basically a number of shield cells made up between points."

Harry nodded. He got the gist of what he was saying, but the rest went over his head.

"Can we modify it to create a second layer?"

Knight shrugged. "Maybe Remus would know?"

"Ohhhhhh Reeeeeemuuussss..." Harry hollered. "Wheeerree aaarreee youuuu?"

.o'OoOoO'o.

Remus wasn't seen for another twenty four hours after that.

He refused to say where he'd been which annoyed Harry a bit, but Remus told him it was personal and he backed off after that.

Unfortunately Remus was little help. He recognised the problem as being a geometry problem, but having never studied geometry himself, had no idea how to implement things the way Harry had asked.

Harry grumbled to himself. Knight had kindly pointed out that Harry was constantly renewing his shield between bullets and on the night, he could well have four hundred military personnel firing at him at once.

Harry shuddered. Even he couldn't pull a shield that could withstand all of those at once.

"Harry?" A female voice called. Harry looked up from the equations he was looking at to see Hermione grinning at him.

"Guess what?"

"What?" Harry asked unenthusiastically.

Hermione approached him and kissed him on the lips. "I love you."

Harry pushed her away and then thought about what she'd said.

"You do?" He asked in surprise.

She held out a vial. "Your antidote sir." She grinned.

"No way!" Harry said grabbing it off her and downing it immediately.

"It takes a few hours to kick in, but it worked for me."

Harry grinned at her. "I thought you were studying for exams."

"Oh, you know me; star student by day, renegade researcher by night."

"I don't suppose the renegade wants to help me with something then?" Harry asked, glad to have his Hermione back to help him out.

Harry wrote down an equation on paper which he had started from scratch with it so often that he had the thing memorised.

"What's this?"

"Protego on paper." Harry replied. "I can stop a bullet with it, but I'm not sure that you could, so we need something better."

"Why do we need to stop bullets?" She asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Oh right, I never told you about the new mission did I?"

Hermione frowned. "You said we had one, but never what it was."

"Right. We're supposed to decimate the muggle military headquarters."

Her jaw dropped. "You're kidding."

Harry shook his head. "No idea why we're attacking muggles, but that's the job."

"I'm not sure I want to keep up this contract with the Dark Lord if we're going to attack muggles. They're not being obliterated that we know of. There would just be too many of them for it."

Harry nodded. He had been thinking the same thing. "Yeah, I agree. But having said that, I'm not sure we can afford to piss off both Dumbledore and the Dark Lord."

Hermione nodded. "You're right. So we're going to do it?"

"Assuming we can figure out how to stop a bullet, the protego charm creates a lattice that curves around the body, what I want to do is make the lattice two layers deep and make the lattice more complicated so that bullets would have to go through two layers."

Hermione nodded. "You're talking maths beyond what I've ever studied. We might need to enlist the help of a professional mathematician."

"I'm sure I can convince them to make it a priority." Harry informed her.

"Don't threaten them!" Hermione frowned.

Harry looked startled. "I-I wasn't going to. I was talking about money."

"Oh." Hermione looked ashamed, creating a gap in their dialog.

"I've missed this." Harry said brightly. "Having you beside me." Then he started laughing uncontrollably.

"What?"

"I have a large cauldron of the most potent love potion known to mankind brewing, and I can only think of one use for it."

Hermione grinned. "How about I go toe-nail hunting?"

Harry smiled broadly and nodded. "Are you thinking who I'm thinking?"

"Umbridge."

"Why don't we hit Fudge with a dose too?"

"I'd say we've got a plan."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Luna woke up feeling rather light-headed. There was no noise that she could hear except for light snoring from the makeshift beds that Remus and McGonagall slept in, in the next room over.

She felt incredibly cold. You're a vampire now sweetie, of course you're going to be cold. The motherly voice told her. That voice was omnipresent in her life.

She shivered and let out an unsteady breath. Her lungs feeling... fluffier, if that was the right word for it.

She tried to lift herself from the coffin but she felt so weak.

"It's about time you woke up sleepyhead." A familiar young voice told her. 'Master...' was the word that she associated with that young voice.

"Get up, and we'll find you something to drink. You're very parched aren't you?"

In an attempt to say that she was alright, she realised that her master was right. She did have a parched throat. She felt compelled to get up and despite the fact her body complained to the point of being excruciatingly painful, she forced herself upwards.

When she was finally standing, she just felt like she wanted to collapse.

"Follow me sleepy." Cynwise commanded and walked passed the master bedroom where she found her chosen masters snuggling up to each other in a mutual comfort Cynwise felt they really deserved.

She stepped out of the cave into the surrounding forest area, Luna trailing behind her.

"Hurts." Luna rasped softly as they walked.

Despite the cold of her body, it felt like it was on fire, making it move with no blood in her system to power her body. It was like a motor with no oil.

"This is what it is like at your weakest." Cynwise said sagely.

"Your prison... like this?"

Cynwise was once again surprised by the amount of knowledge Luna had on her, and replied harshly "Yes. Until you drink blood, you will feel like this."

Luna shook her head. She couldn't drink the blood of something living. The spirits abhorred it when creatures died prematurely.

They walked for an hour in the forest, by which time Luna was desperate for blood. Her hearing became acutely aware of every living animal's heartbeat. The rabbit in the bushes would make a quick snack. Or perhaps that deer.

She was not even aware of the fact that Cynwise had been leading her in circles for the entire time.

"I need... blood." Luna cried softly. "Please master..."

"Mistress." Cynwise said. "If you want blood. You'll have to get it yourself. Go."

Luna looked thankful for the release from her previous command and Luna could hear the thunder of a large heartbeat. It sounded divine, it sounded alive. It sounded like... a bear!

The blond vampire in the technicolour clothes tore after the beast which was not impressed in the slightest at being charged and swiped a powerful arm at her.

Luna, too slow to dodge, was pushed back and a large gash opened her chest, but nothing leaked.

She charged again and this time the bear brought it's teeth down on her arm.

She screamed in pain but tried punching with her right arm which dazed it a little but then it clamped down harder, tearing her arm clean off.

Her voice echoing through the forest caused all the sleeping birds to wake up and take flight to wherever the inhuman voice was not.

Cynwise watched in morbid fascination. "I deliberately picked a place with three deer close by, and she goes and picks to fight with a bear." A bear that was too much for her. It could not kill her, no matter what it did to her, her body would regenerate, though it might take years in her current state, and though she was expressly told not to interfere,

the rules that Cynwise had been given by her own master in the past had been based on the first meal being a human.

"Hey you big bully!" She cried out and ran at an incredible speed towards the bear, ducking under its head and kicking its chest breaking a few ribs.

The bear stumbled which gave Cynwise the chance to roll out from under it and quickly grabbed its neck and swung herself all the way around after clamping down on it, twisting its head a full three hundred and sixty degrees.

The bear slumped to the ground.

"Go on. I know you're hungry." Cynwise told her one-armed protege.

Luna right now wanted nothing more than to nurse her arm, but still felt that desire for blood that she could not stop.

Leaving her amputated arm to one side, Luna's fangs elongated as she approached it and sank her teeth into its neck.

As Luna drank, Cynwise picked up the arm. The Last Dark Lord would be able to reattach it.

When her minion finally came up for air, her mouth full of fur, Cynwise felt rather bad for allowing her to have such a harsh lesson. She should have taken her to a populated area and had her feed off of a human. They were typically better for vampires in general, but it was not really a luxury she felt they had.

With Luna's first lesson complete and her body starting to be able to move without command, Cynwise would bring her before the vampire council for an introduction as was proper. After that, she would ask Luna to come back to the cave where Cynwise would host a tea party and introduce Luna to all of her dollies.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Luna turned out to be a major distraction and both the Barons Black were very glad that Cynwise was taking her job as master very seriously. She hated to be serious and much preferred to play, so after every lesson, Cynwise would either ask her or demand of her, to do something that Harry thought appropriate for a six year old. Playing with her dolls, bullying the resident werewolf or demanding that McGonagall get them some blood flavoured candy. Something they never seemed to get through their heads that the ageing teacher just could not do, for fear of Dumbledore finding her.

At one point, Knight had the pleasure of watching Cynwise order Luna play. He thought it was fascinating that Luna never once argued and once Harry explained it to him, his only comment was "She's using the voice. The Bene Gesserit witch must be obeyed." to which Hermione sniggered and everyone else present just felt plain confused.

There were of course the occasional arguments, 'She ate my ice cream', 'That was my tea cup' and 'No! I will not allow you to colour your coffin pink, brown and navy blue!' At which point Harry got fed up with the both of them and told them to go outside and play.

He and Hermione had been spending time either studying for exams or studying for an attack on Britain which made their distractions very hard to put up with when Cynwise wasn't being a master.

Yet, Harry typically found himself on breaks playing along with them, either playing horsie or swinging Cynwise around and around or occasionally, she had caught him waltzing with her perched upon his right arm with his left arm outstretched.

It was at that point that Hermione realised that Harry would be a very good father. Stern, but not controlling, playful, yet ready to be serious when he needed to. She found herself wondering what it would be like to be a mother and whether she would be up to the job.

Such ideas were quickly put aside as exams started in two days and despite the fact that she knew everything backwards having studied it in advance the year before, but she never seemed to feel prepared for it.

Hermione had of course found out about Dobby rather quickly as the small elf kicked her out of their make-shift kitchen. The small house-elf had taken to ruling it with an iron fist. After that incident, Hermione wanted nothing more than to take said iron fist and beat Harry over the head with it.

Harry informed her that he was an unwilling master and was forcing money into a bank account set up just for him.

After that, she just grumbled.

Remus and McGonagall often left the cave for lengths at a time, never telling anybody where either of them left, but it always seemed like one or the other was at the cave, but rarely both.

Yet when McGonagall was in the cave, she had taken to long hours of staring at Draco's motionless body. Which Harry found rather unusual.

The look on McGonagall's face when she had seen Draco for the first time had been nothing short of humorous. She had thought him dead and gave Harry an earful about the level of hygiene around the place.

Then Harry told her he was still alive because Harry hadn't decided what to do with him; even at the present Harry still had no idea. So until he had enough time to consider it, the heir to the Malfoy family was now his personal wall-hanging.

"I really wish none of this ever happened." The older lady commented sadly. "I know that you and Draco had your differences, but to keep someone in suspended animation like that... It just seems horrible."

"I'm not surprised he lied to me. Though, he did say he was planning something to do with Susan." Harry's voice was even and rather emotionless. 'The same Susan that Dumbledore gave me a love potion for.'

Harry wondered if there was something about Susan he didn't know. There had to be a reason why Dumbledore had wanted them together. Before that, it was Ginny. Why the switch?

Maybe there was a connection somewhere, or maybe he was just reading too far into it.

But then again... Voldemort had been after Hermione because of her magical potential. What if Draco had been after Susan on Voldemort's orders?

No. There was no basis for that assumption.

"Personally, I think you should build a prison for him." Minerva said finally, bringing him from his thoughts.

"Thanks, but no thanks." Harry shook his head. "Last thing I want is for someone like him to be conscious. I wouldn't put it past him to be resourceful enough to break out."

Minerva pursed her lips.

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In their spare time, Harry and Hermione had gone to the University of London with ten thousand pounds to have one of their professors give up their day to work on the problem. Naturally, once they'd made their way to the Mathematics department and started knocking on random doors and explaining the problem, flashing some cash and they'd hired themselves a mathematician for the day.

Questions were asked, but Harry and Hermione remained resolutely vague.

The man they'd found, a Professor Robert Williams was a mathematical fanatic. He was ready to jump down the throat of their school when he found out that Harry had no formal teaching with Algebra and technically it was an elective.

They never managed to get him to back down completely, but they did express a level of urgency, which a man being paid a thousand pounds an hour shouldn't complain about, especially if he was being paid cash in hand.

It was a very happy wizarding couple that returned to the cave that night and set about converting the new formula into inflictions of the word 'Protego' and into hand movements.

With the extra shield cells, it was impossible to cast the spell with a wand. It just required more magic than could be filtered through the piece of wood.

The tests however were very successful and even Hermione stepped into the firing line and out without a single scratch.

The new shield was the one thing that Harry did not inform Wormtail about when planning the attack. There was no logical reason for it; it just seemed like the spells he and Hermione created were for their use alone.

Hermione still spent a lot of time at Hogwarts which irritated Harry tremendously for fear that she was still in love with Ron, but Hermione insisted that they had an extra edge over Dumbledore once again and she wanted to use it.

It was also an excellent opportunity for her to use a switching spell on her goblet filled with love potion with Dumbledore's as he placed it to his lips.

He gave an odd look to his goblet, ran a diagnostic over it and finding no poisons, downed the rest of it.

Hermione thought that after the last poisoning incident he would be more careful with what he ingested, but who was she to complain. She supposed that he thought he had her under her thumb. Her personal mission filled, she turned to see Ron leering at her. She really didn't want to know what was running through his head.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Everyone seemed mildly surprised that Harry was around for exams.

Harry ran his quill through his mouth trying to think of a good answer on his charms exam and found himself looking around the room specifically for Hermione who wasn't even in the room. His eyes landed on Ron and could see that his one-time-friend was having a lot of trouble with the exam. He knew exactly why having listened to Hermione rant about it.

Harry himself was feeling rather uncomfortable in this exam. Mostly because the girl directly in front of him was Susan Bones who had flashed him a happy smile when she noticed who was behind her. When she tried to say hello, Harry immediately started softly spouting off random facts about wards.

Now that the exam had started, Susan was just actively scribbling away on her paper. Harry watched her for longer than he'd meant to and she flicked her hair behind her ear, revealing unmistakably for a brief second a small star behind her ear.

Harry gaped. Susan was star-crossed! Wait, if she was star crossed, then of course Draco was after her. She was Voldemort's replacement for Hermione, and that probably meant that Ginny was star-crossed too.

Harry's mind reeled as he tried to put the pieces together.

Dumbledore wanted Harry to be with either Susan or Ginny. Undoubtedly he knew about Susan, but perhaps not Ginny otherwise he would have found traces of someone following Ginny as well.

He guessed that Dumbledore knew that Voldemort thought himself to be the Last Dark Lord, so of course he would be after the Star-crossed. Harry had the suspicion that Susan was perhaps the easiest for the Dark Lord to get to.

No, Hermione was the easiest for the Dark Lord to get to. So why not her?

Simple. Dumbledore couldn't control her.

"Quills down!" Marchbanks called. "Accio papers."

'Shit!' Harmor grumbled, he'd only gotten three quarters of the way through it before he started daydreaming.

.o'OoOoO'o.

"How'd you go?" Hermione asked him that night when she arrived.

"I was doing really well until Susan distracted me." Harry said irritably.

"Really?" Hermione replied tartly as she put her hands on her hips. "And what pray tell was she doing that had you so distracted in the middle of an exam?"

"Flashing me the little star behind her ear."

Hermione puffed herself up to yell at him when she heard the word 'flashing' but the little star totally cancelled the effect.

"Susan is like me?"

"I'm almost positive that Ginny is too." Harry replied. "I've been thinking it over ever since my exam, and I'm sure that Dumbledore intended for me to fall in love with one of them, then he'd hand them over to Voldemort on a silver plate and tell me to go save them in the hope that I'd kill Voldemort and optionally come home with the girl and live happily ever after, preferably though, I'd kill Voldemort in a mutual takedown."

This got Hermione thinking. It sounded like something Dumbledore would do, but she still felt like he was drawing conclusions from too little information.

"It doesn't matter, I don't think that Dumbledore realises that I'm the Last Dark Lord." He said with a grin.

"I thought you were refusing to believe that."

"I'm not sure what it is I'm going to do in the future to stop any more Dark Lords from popping up, but I'm going to take both of them down. You and me... we're going to make this world a better place." He told her sincerely.

"Together? You and I?" She asked hopefully.

"Together. Actually..." Harry said, his eyes brightening. "Wait here."

Harry dashed off past and almost collided with Lupin who was rather startled. He came back a second later where he dropped to one knee and pulled a box out of his pants. Hermione hitched her breath.

Lupin poked his head around into the front annex.

"Come play Bubbles!" Cynwise said, tugging on his shirt.

"In a sec, I want to see this." Remus said turning back to the scene unfolding in front of him.

"I know this may seem rather sudden." Harry was saying. "But I really want to be with you. I want to save Britain from Dumbledore and I can't do it if we're not together. Please 'mione, will you marry me and help me save the world?" He opened the box, showing the ring he had retrieved from the vault that day.

Hermione gaped. "Harry. I-" She looked completely stunned. "I- I can't believe you ruined a perfectly good proposal with cheesy lines like that."

Harry looked rather crestfallen and realised he had gotten caught up in the moment and when he thought back, it was a pretty stupid way to propose to a girl.

"Of course I will you silly skrewt." She giggled. "I'll marry you, and save the world and whatever else we'll get up to in our lifetimes."

Harry felt like his face would shatter if he smiled any bigger. They enveloped each other in an intimate hug and kissed each other

passionately before Harry was able to remove the ring from the box and place it on her finger.

In the corridor, Remus looked ready to strangle the Potter heir, Minerva lightly groaned, Cynwise was frowning and Luna had a dreamy smile on her face. "I wish someone would propose to me like that."

"You're a vampire. Vampires don't get married." Cynwise scolded softly. Luna pouted.

"You mean it? You'll really marry me?" Harry beamed.

"Quit asking me or I'll change my mind." The Baroness said with a grin.

"I just... I can't believe you said yes! I mean..." Harry turned and started running "Remus! Remus!"

Everyone stepped out into the annex, Harry too happy to be surprised. "Remus! She said yes!"

Remus grinned. Despite the pathetic execution, He couldn't help but see an older James in place of Harry carrying on in exactly the same way.

.o'OoOoO'o.

In the days that followed, Hermione and Harry both continued to go to exams and Hermione was in full defiance of Dumbledore by wearing her engagement ring the whole time, even if it was upside down. Otherwise she would have been mobbed by a pack of rabid Ravenclaws wanting to know who the lucky man was.

After exams were over, there was only one week left of school before the students would all return to their respective homes and only ten days until the raid on the military base. All of their spare time was spent working on plans, either in their cave or in the Dark Lord's study with Wormtail ironing out problems.

The couple had taken to sleeping in the same bed, though never once without clothes on and while they were allowing each other to touch each other in what Harry had always termed 'forbidden places', Harry was dedicated to the idea of not having sex until the night they married.

Hermione thought it was admirable, but rather old fashioned.

Life seemed perfect at that point until the last day of school when Harry and Hermione went to Hogwarts one last time to pack up their belongings.

It seemed like it was going to be easy. There were no elaborate schemes this time. They were just going to pack the trunks when nobody else was around and portkey out of there.

That was the plan anyway.

Hermione shoved a number of books away into her trunk and her uniforms neatly on top.

"Hey, I was told you'd be up here."

"Ron? What are you doing here? How did you get up here anyway, this is the Ravenclaw girls dormitory."

"I have permission." Ron said simply. "Look, I wanted to thank you for your help, I don't think I would have done half as well in the exams if not for you."

"You're welcome." She said shortly.

"Dumbledore told me that your parents died, I was wondering if you had anywhere to stay. I've owled mum and she's agreed to let you stay with us if you need somewhere."

"Thanks Ron, but I've got somewhere to stay." She said as forgotten wounds that had not healed reopened.

"Alright. Can I at least you to lunch in Hogsmede before we leave?"

"Ron, look. I don't love you. I don't even care about you."

"What?" Ron looked taken aback. "It seemed to me you cared back when we were studying! You can't just turn your feelings on and off like that."

"You can if it's a love potion causing you to act that way." Hermione replied.

"Hmph. So you found out about that huh?"

"I was there when he poured it down my throat." Hermione said sharply.

"I will have you Hermione. You're destined to be mine. I'd prefer it to be by choice." Ron said darkly.

She laughed at him. "This is a new side of you I've never seen before."

Ron pulled out his wand deliberately. "Dumbledore hasn't obliviated me ever since you were moved out of Gryffindor. He explicitly told me that if I kept up the act, you'd be mine and he wouldn't do it any more if I just followed his orders. He's more powerful than me, he's more powerful than you. He's the most powerful wizard alive. So be a good girl and come with me."

Hermione stomped up to him and flashed the engagement ring in his face. "Do you have any idea what this means?"

Ron stared at it, his face becoming very angry. "You unfaithful mudblood bitch!"

Ron brought his fist across her face. Ron's quidditch practice had given him arms that could sprawl just about anybody to the ground. "It's Harry isn't it! That bastard Baron has got you under a love potion too does he? I'll kill him!"

He pointed his wand at Hermione. "If I can't have you... I'll make sure that nobody can!"

Hermione felt a cold chill coming down her neck as she guessed what was coming next and despite the numbness crawling across her face, she raised her hand and used *tergum compello* to push him backwards as he yelled "Avada-". The magical shove sending him into the wall.

Ron was winded, but recovered quickly, having had many bludgers to the gut. "Avada Kedavra!" The green light shot across the room and it missed Hermione by a hair.

"Ron, if you don't want to die, you should stop right now."

"Avada Kedavra!" Hermione dodged right and the spell just missed her waist.

She would not reason with him any longer. They had been friends for five years and she wanted to spare him death for that reason, but he was a puppet right now, and always.

"Crucio." Hermione chanted with her hand outstretched, aiming to the left of Ron, precisely where he dodged to. She had fought knight often enough to notice people's balance, a good sign of where they were going to dodge if they needed to.

Ron screamed as the *cruciatuus* took hold and made him convulse.

Letting go of the curse, Hermione *Accio'd* his wand and as he glared up at her, she cast the *stasis* charm on him, freezing him in that awful stare. She fell to the floor in exhaustion. Time magic was the worst kind of magic to use and strictly forbidden but that didn't matter to her.

"I'll kill you when Harry gets around to killing Draco. You deserve so much more than a simple killing curse, Ronald." She said acidly as she locked the girl's dormitory and finished packing.

With a hand on each set of luggage, organic or not, she portkeyed away from Hogwarts.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry looked on in shock as he saw Ron appear with his fiancée. Upon seeing Harry, Hermione threw herself at him, shaking from the adrenalin rush.

"Are you alright?" Harry demanded. "What happened?"

"He tried to kill me." She said with a tremble in her voice. "He really tried to use the killing curse on me."

"That bastard." Harry said in a cold fury. "I'll kill him myself."

Hearing Hermione come back, Luna popped her head in the room. "Oh, it's Ronald. May I eat him?"

"No, you may not." Cynwise called, following her into the room. "We're going to save him for our master's potions."

"You will not!" Her masters both said simultaneously.

"He's going on the wall with Draco." Hermione said resolutely. "Until we decide what to do with him."

"Whatever you say mummy." Cynwise replied cheekily.

The two humans both glared at her as she left to go play choo-choo trains with uncle Bubbles.

Harry gave Hermione a wry smile. "I'm glad you're alright. I don't know what I would have done if he'd hit you."

Hermione hugged him. "Lucky for me he's a bad shot."

Harry deeply hoped that they'd both survive the attack in a few days. The day of the attack seemed so close, and yet, so far away.

"You know... Despite what I said, I'm glad to be gone from Hogwarts. I don't think I want to ever go back."

"Me either."

Author's note:

First and foremost, I'd like to say that I screwed up BIG time with the last chapter. I promise I will never use a love potion as an unplanned plot device ever again. (No promises there if it's planned) People hated the idea and truth be told, it was painful for me to write.

I thought I'd fix the problem by making sure it didn't go for more than half a chapter in this one. Unfortunately, by the time I'd cut the whole thing short, I was still at 8,000 words so my muse told me, if you want to finish that thing up half-way through, you're going to need to do at least another 6,000 and the words just kept flowing.

I would have liked to put more fluff into this chapter after they got together, but I'm kind of itching to start on the next chapter, (which is also the reason for a shortened beta-reading period which I have a feeling a few of you will have noticed before I said it...)

According to the challenge, Ron was supposed to try and AK Hermione at the trainstation, but I just couldn't justify her being there, so it was moved to a more likely place... I guess I fail the challenge huh:(

Oh, and before someone even tries asking, NO! THIS STORY WILL NOT BE Dumbledore/Umbridge! (By merlin what an ugly thought...)

--Steven

Omake #2: The world's worst mistake.

After Professor Binns had left the school, citing reasons that he felt he was about due for long-service leave, the school got a wizard who was better known for his work with muggles as a psychologist.

You could tell from the questions he asked his students. In one particular class, he attempted to challenge his fifth year Ravenclaws and Gryffindors with the question, "If I were to give you a time turner,

and you could go back in time to fix anything at all, what would it be? That is to say, what do you think the world's worst mistake is."

He paused for effect. "I'll give you fifteen minutes, feel free to talk it over with the person next to you."

One girl's hand shot up immediately.

"Do you really think you have a good answer, you didn't think about it very long Missss..."

"Loony lovegood." Someone answered on her behalf. The professor nodded in thanks and looked to his student.

"Miss Lovegood."

"I've always known what's wrong with this world. If you give me that time turner I'd gladly fix it for you."

"Really?" The young professor asked. "Well then, you tell me, what is wrong with the world?"

"Lentils." She said in the normal serious voice she used. "Without a doubt. Lentils."

Omake #3: Umbridge my valentine

Albus Dumbledore had absolutely no idea why he was sneaking around this particular residence. He had no idea why he was sneaking.

Further more, he had no idea why he was sneaking around the residence with a Ukulele in hand. It just made no sense and was rather out of character.

As he glanced up, he saw standing on her balcony... the ugliest woman he'd ever seen, and yet... tonight she looked stunning to him. He was left speechless and suddenly he realised why he had the mini guitar in his hands.

He moved to take a place in front of her window when he saw someone else standing right where he intended to be, and he noticed a rich baritone singing sweet nothings to Umbridge.

"Uh hem. Come to take him away have you Dumbledore, well get on with it."

"Actually Delores, I think I might like to join dear minister Fudge in a little rivalry."

"What?" Fudge asked, as he broke his song and stared daggers into Dumbledore's face. "No. You can't have her, she's mine!"

"We shall see Cornelius."

Dumbledore dropped to one knee and took place with the Ukulele and played a sweet little lilt, completely outcasting Fudge in his performance.

"Delores my darling, Marry me!" He hollered up to her.

"Get a grip you two dolts! I'd rather marry that- thing- Reubius Hagrid!"

Her word pierced through his heart, and a look at fudge showed he felt the same thing.

An extra shadow moved from her balcony over the men, and as they looked up, they had only a few seconds to apparate away before getting splattered by a wall-sized display cabinet with all of her favourite china in it.

When Dumbledore returned to bed that night, he just wanted to cry. His dear sweet Delores. The great and powerful Dumbledore, was rejected as if he were a bum on the streets. He had not cried for a hundred years or more, and yet, that's what he did on this night.

Chapter 10 - The Battle of Erskine

Harry woke up the next morning feeling very comfortable. Hermione had her head on his shoulder and slept fitfully, not making a noise apart from the small inhale and exhale of air. Last night she had coaxed him to sleep with his shirt off and she herself was wearing nothing except a nightie.

It was all a part of Hermione's master plan of course. The Baron Black was a cruel and unforgiving creature with no emotions. Harry Potter on the other hand was a teenager who had more than enough emotion as far as Hermione was concerned at least, always afraid he'd do something to push her away. So she would gradually bring him to sleep with her naked and he might be a little less innocent by then.

That was not to say they hadn't played with each other, and each of them had enjoyed it immensely, but Harry kept an infuriating check on his emotions somehow and resolved to never go all the way.

Harry himself couldn't believe that he had actually proposed to her, he still couldn't believe that she had accepted, but even as his eyes focused and he placed his glasses on his face for another day, he came face to face with the ring he had given her. Every morning was a new reminder that he was a fiance.

Hermione stopped pretending to be asleep and kissed him on the cheek. "Good morning."

"Hey, sleep well?"

She nodded and smiled. "Uh huh."

Harry blinked as their artificial light flickered on. "Awww... I don't wanna get up..." He complained.

"Me neither, but we're supposed to visit Greyback today and go through the plan with him."

Harry groaned. The last time he had met the leader of the werewolf 'pack' Harry felt like the man had glared at him the whole time. Kind of like Bellatrix tended to do unless Harry was doing something gruesome.

That and the fact that werewolves other than Remus tended to make him nervous. It was hard to tell whether they'd take his orders or use him as a quick snack. Especially Greyback who had apparently developed a spell that could fully emulate a full moon, allowing him to change at will. Harry thought it was creepy, though they'd be making extensive use of the spell together with a large batch of wolfsbane that Snape had been preparing just for this occasion.

After Hermione pushed herself upwards, Harry slipped out from under her and stepped out of their bedroom where he found Remus practising his wandless magic. It wasn't a skill Remus used often, though he was capable of it; it wore him out quickly.

He found Luna teaching Cynwise how to play exploding snap in the study where they had taken to eating breakfast. "Hey Dobby, what's for breakfast?" Harry called out.

Luna looked up at him, "You look really delicious." She said showing her fangs.

"I don't like the way you said that Miss Lovegood. That's my meat you're drooling for." The Baroness growled from behind him as he sat down.

"She can't help it." Cynwise said from behind her cards. "Vampires are inherently sexual creatures. Still, Luna, you may not make moves on our masty."

Luna pouted.

"I've never seen you show any sexual nature." Harry commented.

Cynwise gave Harry a death-glare. "I'm a vampire with the body of a six year old, I consider myself handicapped in that respect."

"Right, sorry." Harry said blushing. He hadn't meant to hurt her feelings.

"If I could have anything in the world, it would be an older body."

"You wouldn't want your teeth back? Or to become human?"

"And have a lifespan? I think I'd feel I didn't have enough time in the world to do anything! As for my teeth, I think if I could age a little bit, I would have lost those teeth anyway and gotten adult teeth."

"I'll bet you had really cute baby fangs." Hermione said.

Harry wondered how a vampire's fangs could ever be described as cute.

Cynwise pouted and from then on until she went to bed, gave both of her masters the silent treatment.

Over breakfast, Hermione finally asked Harry when he had in mind to get married, who would marry them, and what kind of event it should be.

Harry wanted it to be a simple event. He didn't want to bring too much attention to himself. They were both sure that having Dumbledore aware they were getting married was anything but a good idea.

When Hermione had asked him where he wanted to get Married, Harry had jokingly suggested that Voldemort marry them.

"Harry, the only way you're going to get me to an alter with Voldemort is if you can convince him to allow an all-muggle audience and he has to wear hot pink."

Harry struggled very hard to get that image out of his head and pretended to look thoughtful.

"Harry! Voldemort as a 'Justice of the peace'? The concept is just oxymoronic!"

"So we'll elope to a muggle town, organise for a Mayor or someone to marry us and everybody will be none the wiser. We'll invite everyone that lives here." He glanced at Cynwise. "It'll be a night time affair obviously."

Hermione seemed happy with those arrangements. The only question left then was 'when?'. Harry didn't want to leave it too long; his self-imposed chivalry was really starting to wear him down and he was starting to find it very hard to resist Hermione when she pleaded him with puppy dog eyes.

Likewise, Hermione was rather insistent that they didn't leave it too long.

When Remus woke up in the morning and heard them talking about it, he had pushed the question of whether it was alright to get married so soon. They hadn't been going out for even a year and they'd just gotten over being forcibly in love with someone else.

"We've known each other for seven years Remus," Hermione huffed. "We may not have been going out that whole time, but I like to think I know Harry better than anybody else in the world."

"It's alright Remus. I think it's a good idea." Luna told him as he dug into his bacon and eggs. "Fate has already put them together, and Marriage really is nothing more than a ceremony."

Her way of putting it disturbed Harry. To him, Marriage seemed like a huge barrier. Who knew what was on the other side?

Putting aside his own breakfast, Harry asked his beloved if she was ready for their trip to see the werewolves.

She wasn't enthusiastic, but she downed her pumpkin juice and they both moved to get their cloaks.

.o'OoOoO'o.

As they were expecting, Wormtail planned on making sure he knew everything about the plan.

'Why was the damned rat was so interested in this mission?' Harry wondered to himself. Sure, Voldemort really didn't want it to fail, but on that same note, Wormtail never really got involved in the last one and he was actively involved in that one.

They had organised to meet in an abandoned warehouse in London. It was dark except for the lumos of three wands illuminating the packing crates immediately surrounding them.

Harry saw what he thought were printing presses, but having only once taken a school trip to a newspaper printing press he wasn't convinced.

They were waiting an hour and a half past their designated meeting time before Greyback finally appeared. Harry was seriously thinking about skinning him and using him to keep warm over the next Christmas at their cave.

Wormtail was probably thinking the same thing.

"Yo."

"Crucio!"

Harry watched as the werewolf collapsed to the ground and writhed in pain.

"Your tardiness is inexcusable." Pettigrew sniffed.

"Why? It's only these two." He grinned nastily at the barons as he pushed himself shakily off the floor.

"Do you have something against me?" Harry asked him, leaving the air tense.

"I just don't like taking orders from kids." Greyback replied, not looking anywhere in particular.

"Care to duel me? I may be young, but I'm more than enough for a hairball like you." Harry replied savagely.

Greyback paled. "Your skills at duelling are not in question." Fenrir said. "But we werewolves stick together, and you have a reputation for not caring about those under you. You got two people killed in your last mission."

"There was only one killed." Harry retorted. "And that was a betrayal."

"Heh, it's true. You really don't even care. How about the one killed when you blew up that wall?"

Harry was surprised. Yet, as Greyback had said, Harry really didn't feel sad about it. It was just a Death Eater.

"Then there is the fact that we are... werewolves. I'm certain you have no love for our kind."

"You might be surprised." Hermione replied. "We live with one under our roof."

"You do?" Both Pettigrew and Greyback adjusted their composes.

"You know Remus Lupin don't you Peter?" Harry asked.

Peter coughed nervously.

Greyback snorted in disapproval. "Hmph, I didn't realise that traitor was still alive."

"Don't speak about Remus that way." Pettigrew snarled. "The only reason he didn't join the Dark Lord was because he had friends firmly planted in with the Order of the Phoenix."

"That didn't stop you." Fenrir replied nastily.

"I had my reasons." Peter snapped back.

Harry stepped between them. "If you want me to show some compassion to your werewolves Fenrir, I want to meet each of them, in person, and I want to know their names, this afternoon if you can."

Fenrir thought about the suggestion and slowly agreed.

"And Wormtail, I'm most interested in hearing those reasons." Harry said coldly. "They are the reasons that got my parents killed aren't they?"

The rat-man blanched.

"Boys. Enough of this for now, we have a mission to do." Hermione said from her position against one of the crates. "Werewolves aren't bad people if you treat them as humans." She said. "Just like vampires, goblins and house-elves." Fenrir growled at the mention of vampires, but didn't say anything.

"Let us meet the team, and we'll make sure we do all we can to make sure they return alive."

Greyback nodded. "I'll be back in a sec then, I'll get Fluffy organising this 'meeting'. We'll see if anybody follows you."

He disappeared with a loud pop and was gone for about five minutes before returning, which surprised Harry. He'd been expecting to be waiting half an hour while he had lunch too.

"Three hours and everyone will be assembled. Now, let's get this show on the road." He said.

Hermione pushed herself away from the crates and pulled out a map.

"Now, I have with me the layout of Erskine Barracks. According to intelligence, they have guards stationed where I have the crosses in red.

"We will have the element of surprise, which makes it highly important that we hit their resting quarters as quickly as possible.

That will allow us to kill off the reinforcements before anybody has a chance to think of calling for them."

"We guesstimate there are about four hundred people on site there."

"I've heard all this shit." Fenrir growled. "I'm not interested in what we have to do. I want to know how we're going to do it."

Hermione glared at him. "Very well, but don't bother asking me to fill in any gaps then."

"First Phase, Harry and I blow up this building here. In the confusion, you will take the opportunity to morph and attack the guards surrounding the place..."

.o'OoOoO'o.

"You seem awfully busy..." Remus said softly as he caught Minerva reading.

"How is it going?"

"It will need another month or so, but everything is going well." He said. "I'm toying with the idea of cutting myself a home for myself a couple of hundred meters north."

"Oh?" Minerva raised an eyebrow.

"Our beloved 'Last Dark Lord' will want some space at some point, this cave is very nice and all, but they're entitled to their own time without any of us being here, especially after they get officially hitched."

"Perhaps I ought to consider doing likewise." She said as she transfigured a page into a bookmark and closed the book. Minerva McGonagall always did have a soft spot for Remus, He truly was the Hermione of James Potter's gang.

Remus took note of the writing on the cover. "International Politics?"

"As much as I hate politics, Mister Potter and his betrothed are going to be inundated with political issues if they succeed in defeating both Albus Dumbledore and Tom Riddle."

"Yes, I suppose you're right." Remus replied.

"The way things are going at the moment I don't think there's much chance of me ever going back to teaching at Hogwarts."

Remus smiled sympathetically. "Perhaps once everything has died down and Britain is sane again."

"I don't think that will happen while I'm still alive Remus." She said tiredly.

"Oh come now, you're not that old." He replied. "You're only what... 72 years old." He said. "Oh, this must be one of those mid-life crises I've heard about." He said with a mischievous grin.

"This is a war we're talking about Remus!" She replied through pursed lips. "I'm lucky to have lived as many years as I have!"

"I don't think you need to worry too much." Remus told her. "I don't think anybody would mind you staying here as it all plays out."

"I will do no such thing!" She replied angrily. "I'm stuck here like a cat in a cage! I haven't seen another person ever since those two brought me here!"

"Neither have I." Remus replied.

"I was under the impression you spent most of your time alone." She replied snakily.

"Nobody likes to be alone." Remus replied. "I'm alone because I have to be."

"That's bullshit Remus and you know it."

Remus stared at his ex-teacher stunned.

"You've been alone because you were too scared to let anybody else close."

Remus didn't respond to that. He had tried to let someone get close, but she was killed a few months ago. The memory of Nymphadora returned to him and he found he couldn't argue with her anymore.

Minerva caught the look on his face and softly apologised. "If you want to talk about it, I'll listen. I know what it's like to lose a loved one to war."

"She... She didn't deserve it!" Remus fought back his tears. "She was one of the few people who as willing to accept me for what I am."

Remus started crying and without realising it, found himself bawling on his ex-teacher's shoulder.

.o'OoOoO'o.

At the same time as that meeting, a couple of ladies were roaming the halls of a secret society. People would splutter as they walked passed deliberately with one location in mind.

Two hands reached out and pushed on a couple of doors revealing twelve disgruntled upper-class men and women.

"Uncle Dotty!"

"Cynwise. It has been a long time." The head, oldest vampire replied impatiently. "I had heard that you were back in circulation again, and much to our surprise, you finally took a minion, tough I must say, reports of this... Luna have been nothing less than disturbing."

As he talked, Cynwise and Luna both approached the head of the table. Cynwise rested her chin on the table and looked bored. "Whatcha doin'?" Luna stood back as she had been told to in the past.

"That, is not, nor has it ever been your business." He replied exasperatedly.

"Can I get three guesses?"

He groaned. She hadn't changed one bit. Not that he expected her to.

"You're playing Charades?" He shook his head. "Then... you're talking about the next bloodsport."

"No!" He grumbled. Everyone present was getting antsy at her being there.

"Then... are you talking about negotiations with the one who calls himself Voldemort?"

"N- How did you know about that?"

Cynwise giggled. "I know lots of things." She replied happily. "I know that you shouldn't join him."

"Why you impertinent...!"

"At ease Bartholomew." The man at the centre called. "What do you mean?"

"The Last Dark Lord will be coming to take him down very soon." She said almost mystically. "If you side with Voldemort, you will condemn most of us to death."

"The Last- Cynwise! We have no time for your games!"

"I live with him." She said and turned to Luna. "Luna, tell them the truth."

"Yes master, She and I currently live with The Last Dark Lord, Harry Potter."

"Thank you Luna, you may have a chocolate."

She held out a chocolate and Luna picked it up without using her hands.

"... Vampires don't eat... chocolate."

"I do." Luna replied.

Needless to say, with Cynwise' presence, it was a very, very long meeting. The outcome of which was to delay any agreements with Voldemort.

.o'OoOoO'o.

It took nearly the whole three hours to go through the plan thoroughly while Fenrir pointed out a couple of holes in their plans, like what would happen if they decided to use the helicopters that were shown on the map.

Once the conversation had moved onto petty things that were of no importance, Wormtail had excused himself and took off.

When Fenrir took them to the meeting point for werewolves, the Barons found themselves in the middle of a forest which had a large clearing and two podiums on either side of the forest. When Hermione asked Greyback about it, he told them that this was also the site of a popular werewolf sport but they often used it for meetings as well.

There were already a few people gathered and chatting amongst themselves while passing worried looks at the couple of dementors amongst them.

"You guys seem like a rather tightly knit community." Harry commented.

"After people get turned, they normally go through a period of resentment where they want nothing to do with the person that turned them. Most werewolves get lonely and come join the pack. Others, like your friend Remus, are so overwhelmed with hate for themselves they become lone wolves.

"There are number of werewolves who go out and don't come into the fold that go out and give the rest of us a bad name."

"Is that how many of you get turned? The rogues?"

"No. I myself have turned many myself."

Harry frowned. "Why? Don't you use wolfsbane?"

"Thirty Galleons a month, just in ingredients. It's not a cheap potion." He replied.

Harry and Hermione shared a look. Hermione was fuming, when she and Harry took control of the magical world, they'd see about that!

Over the process of the conversation, a large crowd had gathered and Fenrir gestured to the podium.

"Right." Harry said as he ascended to the podium.

"Good luck," Hermione told him and pressed her mask against his.

He took a moment to compose himself. The glares he was getting was nothing he was unused to.

"How is everyone feeling?" Harry called out to everyone. There was a murmur between the werewolves present. "Presumably, you're all here to create a bit of acceptance for your kind. Is there anybody here who doesn't want to be here, if so, could you please leave now."

The werewolves all looked around, unsure of what to make of the dark clad teenager in front of them.

"Is there anybody here who does not belong to the pack? Anybody amongst you who you cannot trust with your lives?"

"Does that include you?" Someone up the back asked.

"I'm not asking for your loyalty to me, I'm not even asking for your loyalty to the Dark Lord." Harry told them. "I'm asking for your loyalty

to your own cause. Werewolves are persecuted in this world. Wizards fear you and discriminate against you, muggles are only vaguely aware of your existence, and they choose to only make movies and write inaccurate books about you. Do you wish to change that?

"Aren't you all here because you want somewhere that you can fit in and belong to?"

There was a murmur of assent.

Harry smirked inwards.

"Good. There is concern about me being the leader of this attack. It has come to my attention that nobody here thinks that neither the Baroness, nor I care about those put under our charge. Let me say that we have no real compassion for Death Eaters, but especially the Baroness has a soft spot for the oppressed. We'll do our best to make sure you are all given a chance to feel like normal people again."

"So what you're saying is that if we're sympathetic with the Dark Lord, you don't care about us?"

"That depends entirely on why you're with him. I don't go for this pureblood mania, but I don't like the way the world is. I don't know about any of you, but I'm going to change this world."

A low hum of talk rippled through the crowd. "How blasphemous!" Someone called out. "It has been proven that purebloods are vastly superior to mudbloods!"

"How many of you are muggle or muggleborn?" Hermione called out, speaking for the first time amongst them. "Go on, put your hand up."

A few hesitant hands went into the air, then a lot more until more than ninety percent of them had their hands in the air.

"I'm not surprised, I'm sure it would be an insult to a pureblood to be turned into a werewolf. After all, you are 'dark creatures'." She said rather venomously. "You are shunned by society because you have a

transmittable disease which cannot be cured. Yet you cannot tell me you're all here because you believe that purebloods should rule England because of this 'proven' pureblood superiority.

"Personally, I refuse to believe that I'm limited by my blood. I believe that I'm limited by what I perceive as my limits."

She let her words digest and glanced back towards Harry.

Harry returned her gaze and spoke softly in a tone that carried. "If you want me to care about you on that battlefield, come talk with me; tell me your name, if you have a family, anything. I don't care why you're following the Dark Lord, I want to know that each of you have a reason for living and for trying to change this world. I will not care about anonymous lackeys." He said gazing forcefully at them all.

"And what about you? You're wearing a mask!" A woman up the front said.

"I'll take my mask off if you want." Harry replied. "It's merely traditional now that I wear it."

"Go on then!" One egged him on.

So Harry glanced at Hermione and removed the sticking charm from his mask and took back his hood.

Hermione did likewise.

"Harry Potter..." They all seemed to chorus as one.

"So you all seem to know who I am, I'm not anonymous, how many of you are?"

Harry jumped down from the podium and moved to stand in the middle of the crowd where Hermione pushed to join him.

He looked expectantly at them, and there was silence until a man, woman and a child came forth. "I'm Samuel Greenbrook, this is my wife Belinda and my son Paul."

"You're a family of werewolves?" Harry asked surprised and then grinned broadly. "I shouldn't be surprised, I'm happy for you." He held out his hand. "I'm Harry Potter and this is my fiancée, Hermione Granger."

Hermione smiled, but inside, she was jumping for joy, Harry had called her his fiancée!

After that, the werewolves seemed a lot more interested in speaking to the feared, heartless Barons Black.

When they finally left the werewolves, they had a great deal of support from the pack, give or take those who were blood-elitists. Harry had a feeling that by officially announcing his stance on the issue would cause a bit of friction between himself and Voldemort. Ironical as it was that a half-blood should give the impression he himself was an elitist.

Hermione had smiled at him as they apparated back to their cave.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry hung up his cloak and mask and ran his hands through his hair.

"I almost feel like those werewolves would follow you to the ends of the earth." Hermione said. "Every day I'm with you, I feel more and more like you are the destined ruler of this isle instead of either Voldemort or Dumbledore."

"I'm not a great leader." Harry told her as he led her to the kitchen where Dobby was just finishing off making lunch. "I just said what I thought needed to be said."

"And now you have a pack of loyal werewolves."

"You would like some lunch?" Dobby asked them.

"Yes thanks Dobby, do you have anything handy?" Harry asked him.

Dobby walked to his preparation table and handed them a tray of pre-madesandwiches much to Hermione's continuing disapproval.

They both took the sandwiches into their study where Hermione voiced something that had been worrying her ever since she'd involved herself in the mission after the love potion incident.

"Harry, about this mission..." Hermione started. Harry grunted a query in response. "Don't you feel something isn't right about it?"

"Yeah... I have been feeling that way..." Harry said. "But I thought it was simply nervousness from being given such an imposing task."

"I have a gut feeling that we're walking into a trap."

She stared into Harry's eyes and allowed him a moment to think about the likelihood of it by his perspective.

"Doesn't it seem odd that Wormtail is highly interested in our plans, but doesn't seem to care about whether or not we can get along with the werewolves?"

"Why does Voldemort even need to know about how we're going to do it anyway unless he's specifically co-ordinating other attacks with ours?"

"You think he might be co-ordinating an attack against us? Why? We haven't done anything to break the contract..."

Hermione shrugged. "It could be anything. He would kill off anybody that tried to usurp his power. Perhaps he feels threatened. Perhaps he just feels tired of us." There was a moment of silence as she thought. "Perhaps he found out about your prophecy."

Harry frowned. "We could what-if ourselves to death. What we need is contingency plans. We've got a plan that works right? What could go wrong with it?"

Hermione banged her head on the desk. "Only everything! He could inform them ahead of time what our plans are, he could send a legion of death eaters there, he could... He could turn up himself!"

The young man chewed thoughtfully on his curried egg sandwich. "What we need is some anti-anti-apparition wards..."

"Be serious Harry! You can't ward against wards!" She snapped.

"I know," He replied with a wry grin.

They set about designing Plan-B through Plan-Q, but as they soon found out, Hermione's gut feeling that it might have been a trap came far too late. There were simply too many possibilities to nut out plans for everything.

Even worse was the feeling that instead of making up contingency plans, they could have better spent their time inventing new spells to help with the actual eradication of the facility.

Harry wished he had enough power to just vaporise the whole complex.

At one point, Remus and Minerva joined in the conversation and helped out where they could until they were all too tired to do any more, at which point Cynwise and Luna took over.

In the end, they had a handful of plans and Cynwise and Luna were temporarily suspended from the ceiling; the reason being that an army of fictional bears that spread love throughout the world would not stop even quarter an army of death eaters.

So after throwing out seventy-four rolls of parchment with nothing but love-hearts and copying down the two decent ideas the vampires had come up with, they were little better off than the night before.

Harry was glad that they at least stuck to paper. He had heard that as a child he had once gotten crayons onto the Dursley's walls and it had taken Petunia a lot longer to clean it off than it had taken him to

put it on there. Then again... the walls of their home were above all else, sand and rock.

He sighed as he thumbed through plans. He had seriously hoped that Luna would have started acting more maturely without the issue of Dumbledore constantly obliterating her, but it seemed that with her having to obey Cynwise' every command, she felt no need at all to grow up.

So he was resigned to having two eccentric Vampires suspended from the roof which was an excellent punishment for Cynwise, but Luna took it as an opportunity to get a different perspective on the world.

"They're like a couple of children, aren't they?" Remus asked him as Harry admired his handiwork with an annoyed scowl.

"Sure are."

"How are you feeling?" Remus asked. "Your mission is tonight."

Harry nodded. "Hopefully Hermione's premonition will turn out to be a false alarm and we can just wipe the place clean and get out of there."

"I hope it's that simple too." Remus replied in turn. He shifted uncomfortably on his feet before finally opening his mouth to speak. "Harry, I thought you should know... I'm sure that wherever James and Lily are at the moment, they would be proud of you. But I don't think they'd approve of your methods."

"No parent should ever wish a path like ours on their children. I certainly won't."

"Nor I lad."

.o'OoOoO'o.

The Barons Black met their allies prior to the mission to explain changes in plan.

Naturally, the werewolves were quite annoyed about it and got even more uncomfortable when they confided in the werewolves why they were changing the plan, but eventually accepted that perhaps it was weak for a leader to let his subordinates know that he was having second thoughts, but at least he was letting everyone know what could go wrong.

With everybody understanding the countermeasures in place, Harry called forth the group leaders and sub-leaders and handed out necklaces for each of them. One lick of them would set a trigger on Harry and Hermione's medallions they had in their hands. They would be using them as clocks to synchronise the night's events.

After much arguing, everybody had finally decided that perhaps the change in plans were just as well. None of them thus-far trusted Wormtail as far as they could throw the pudgy bastard.

Once they had reminded a man named Forgetful Fred to take his wolfsbane potion, they all apparated to the mission starting point, and once the team was fully assembled, Fenrir pointed his wand skyward and called out "Lunarius!"

The Barons Black darted away from the people in the clearing, making themselves invisible as they ran to the walls of the compound.

Harry glanced upwards as the moon visually swelled, the quarter moon gradually moving to become a full moon.

Apart from the fact that it served the purpose of allowing werewolves to morph to their alternate form in the night, it also did a wonderful job of distracting guards who would stare at the moon and make comments like "I didn't know there was an eclipse tonight..." and "That's not an eclipse dude, Eclipses are the other way around." And "So what do you call an anti-eclipse?"

A few seconds later, they were dead.

A rumble grew in volume until a pack of transformed werewolves cleared the trees and leapt completely over the wall.

Screams echoed through the place followed by gunshots.

Two werewolves stopped in front of the now visible Barons Black who each jumped on the back of the lycans and were promptly taxied to the other side of the wall.

In mid air, Harry and Hermione could see their allies mauling the ground guards whose bullets were barely having any effect on the werewolves.

A louder bang denoted the use of heavier firearms and the first werewolf fell.

Harry and Hermione each nodded to each other and their rides took them at high speed to the barracks while another group headed directly for the armoury.

Erskine Barracks seemed a lot bigger in real life than on the maps, but that hardly surprised the Baron; they always did.

By the time that he reached the barracks, men were already running around like headless chooks and Harry wasted no time in releasing an overpowered reducto and reducing the barracks and everything around it to nothing.

He brushed his hand across his medallion and released his ride to attack some of the scattered men while Harry let loose his new and improved shield and started taking pot-shots at the men who were still standing.

A loud bang in the distance gave Harry knowledge that the other barracks were taken care of and thirty seconds later, a yellow glow on the medallion let Harry know that the armoury was now under werewolf control.

He let loose a sigh. It looks like this would be nothing more or less than a massacre. Nothing had gone wrong so far and with the sheer number of werewolves under his command, they were making mincemeat of the military.

He surveyed the area around him and smiled as he renewed his shield and started his trek back towards the administration building.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Peter Pettigrew was a loyal follower of Voldemort. Or so he told himself as a mantra. "I am my lord's most faithful follower." But even so as he chanted it softly to himself it doesn't seem to ring as true as he wanted it to.

The Silent Knight was standing at attention beside him and Pettigrew's nervousness was not lost on him. In the time that he had known the man, this was the first time in recent years that the rat-man was displaying such unusual behaviour.

Ahead of him, Voldemort was giving a grand speech about how tonight would be the turning point of the war. Knight didn't need pep talks as long as he had a purpose.

"The loyal shall be rewarded at the end of this very evening. Those with me step forward and we leave." Voldemort said, finishing his speech. A cheer ran through the crowd and Pettigrew repeated his mantra one more time.

A number of pops later and the number of wizards present were significantly reduced.

Lucius Malfoy stepped to the front. "You all know the plan. Let's go."

Knight gripped Pettigrew who looked stunned as everybody around them disappeared.

"What's gotten into you?" Knight demanded.

Peter looked around nervously to affirm they were the only ones left.

"James' son." He said nervously. "I lead him into a trap."

"What!" Knight roared.

"I am a loyal Death Eater..."

The Silent Knight glared at the pathetic man who shrunk in front of him. "I'm not going to let that kid get killed. How do we stop this?"

"It's too late by now." Peter lamented. "Bellatrix is there and..."

Knight's eyes went wide and he gripped his companion's arm and promptly apparated him to the Baron's home.

"Minerva! Remus! Cynwise! Someone!" He called out desperately.

Everyone was at the cave, anxiously awaiting the return of Harry and Hermione. They looked at the two arrivals.

Peter locked eyes with Remus and cringed.

"It's a trap."

"I knew it." Minerva said tensely.

"What is he doing here?" Remus asked coldly, then shook his head as he realised there were more important things. "It doesn't matter, we've got to go and help." He said getting up from the chair.

Cynwise looked to Luna. "Come." And they disappeared in a puff of smoke.

"Remus, they're using a werewolf spell, and you haven't taken any wolfbane." Knight told him.

"About that..." Pettigrew said tentatively.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Hermione was to move to the armoury as soon as she had knocked out the barracks. The werewolves would take care of any personnel there, but in their current state, they were hardly able to make the weaponry completely unusable.

The run was about 400 metres from the barracks, it came as a shock to her to see the werewolves savaging already dead military flunkies. She ignored them and walked to the barracks, but soon noticed that many of them were staring at her and growling.

"Don't you have anything better to do?" She demanded. "Withdraw to the headquarters."

They didn't seem to hear her and as she moved to raise her wand at the armoury building, they all dashed towards her, teeth bared.

'Something's wrong!' She thought in a panic.

"Protego!"

.o'OoOoO'o.

A few minutes later, Harry arrived at the headquarters and couldn't believe the sight in front of him. Werewolves lay scattered in front of the building, all dead. Holes littered the ground around them and Harry saw a glint of what looked like silver scattered across the ground.

'Silver bullets! I knew this was a trap!'

As he stepped towards the bodies, a rain of silver and lead drilled into his shield, shattering individual cells of the shield. He could see that from the four story building, most of the windows had weapons poking out of them.

Harry frowned as the werewolves around him started becoming human again. He briefly looked at the moon which was receding. More than likely Hermione had cancelled the spell.

With the bullets still flying around him, he faced placed his wand up his sleeve and pushed all the bodies away from the building using *tergum compello* and when they were far enough away, he took a deep breath and aimed his most destructive spell at the building.

The werewolves, now human, hearing the explosion congregated around Harry, some close enough to almost fall in the huge hole that marked where the administration building had been. A few whistles marked the admiration they had for the feat he had performed.

Harry himself moved towards the crater and looked down. As the dust and smoke cleared, he was able to see a luminous blue shield lay at the bottom of the crater, perfectly protecting the lower areas.

Hermione pushed through the crowd and hugged Harry, then she too noticed the shield.

"The wolfsbane has been tampered with. It seems that Snape made it so that it would be ineffectual after half an hour."

"Damn... That changes everything." Harry remarked. "We should withdraw, this whole thing was a setup."

"I agree."

Harry called out to everybody. "Alright everyone, let's get out of here."

Harry touched his portkey and poured his magic into it. Nothing happened.

A second later the ground started rumbling and everybody seemed to be saying "Now what?"

The tremors grew in magnitude until nobody could stand. Harry fell to his hands and knees and tried to stay no lower than that, but a few people fell into the crater.

From within, a few people could see that the earth inside the depression was slowly rising back up to ground level.

Gunshots rang and those rolling down the precipice were dead when they reached the bottom.

Those standing around were too deafened by the rumbling to notice the appearance of near on two thousand military men and three helicopters now circling around them.

When the ground was level once more, Harry rose to his feet to see that Bellatrix Lestrange and her husband Rudolphus smiling serenely at them.

Behind him was the military with their guns aimed at him and his allies.

They were trapped, like jam in a doughnut.

"Oh Merlin..!" Hermione whispered and immediately every werewolf capable of magic started casting shields; Harry and Hermione following suit a second later, making shields large enough to cover large groups of werewolves.

Instead of the next volley of bullets being fired, Bellatrix rose her wand and re-cast the full moon spell Greyback had used earlier on that night.

"finite!" Harry called out and put up another two shields around muggle-werewolves, only to have Bellatrix try to recast it while Rudolphus was firing random unforgivables at the werewolves.

After about the fifth time of Harry trying to stop the Matriarch of the Lestrange family from transforming his werewolves, Rudolphus got annoyed and called out "FIRE!"

The noise was deafening and many shields couldn't hold.

Harry got off a wide-range slicing spell that disembowelled an arc of soldiers, but only had a brief second to put his shield up.

"This is ridiculous!" Harry called to Hermione whom was spending all her time shielding too.

"That's a might impressive shield you have there kiddos," Bellatrix admired as she fired off an Avada Kedavra right into the midst of the

werewolves. A flick of Harry's hand sent a piece of rock to intercept it before it could hit anybody.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Remus had wanted to jump right down there into the middle of the ring to fight along side Harry, but Minerva had her head screwed on correctly and restrained him with a petrification hex.

"I'm not sure we'll be able to get them out of this..." Knight said, as he looked through his omniculars. "We might be too late."

He handed the device to Pettigrew to look through.

"I'm going to help one way or another." Peter said.

"Currying favour with Harry might save you from him, but it won't save you from me." Remus replied with a low growl as he fought off the spell his ex-transfiguration teacher had placed on him.

"They're handling well enough for now." Knight said with a sigh and with a pop, he disappeared.

"What the... He didn't just leave us did he?" Remus said, simply shocked.

"No." Peter said. "I'm sure he's just getting something to help."

The outcast of the marauders stepped forward and started his way down a knocked down wall that had been destroyed by spell-fire.

"Hey! Wormtail! Wait for me!" Remus called.

Minerva shook her head at the folly of them both, but she couldn't stay and watch. She sighed and turned to the trees, waving her wand intricately until they sprang to life, pulling their roots out of the ground, three enchanted ents moved ahead of her towards the fighting.

.o'OoOoO'o.

"What are we going to do Harry! We can't keep this up forever!"

A couple of werewolves had gotten bored of being shielded and jumped through the shields towards Bellatrix only to be shot down before they could even get close.

Everyone was getting annoyed with how things were playing out. The military were firing too many bullets, the wizards were getting too annoyed and the Lestranges just didn't want to spend so much time for so little pain.

Bellatrix dropped her wand to the ground and Harry was almost blinded as she let her aura flare larger than Harry and Hermione's combined.

"Oh shit!" The Baron Black channelled all his power into stopping the overpowered explosive which was not an easy task. Many werewolves were vaporized in the blast that were outside of His shield range.

It occurred to him that Bellatrix had grown up in Grimmauld place and she probably knew all about the taps. This was going to be a hard enough with the military, let alone with her too.

Still, the flare of her aura was enough to make Harry think that it wasn't natural for someone to have such a large aura and certainly wouldn't have put her above using a power-increasing ritual together with the release of her magic.

"As you can see, I'm not someone to be trifled with. I am done playing."

Hermione felt panic welling up inside of her.

A loud thud-thud-thud alerted her to something coming from behind the military and she could see the branches of an ent.

"Awww," A voice whined from behind her. "But I want to play."

Bellatrix spun around to find Luna Lovegood grinning at her.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are!" Called a far older vampire and a cloud of smoke rose from the ground and second later, an army of vampires joined in to help with the fight.

Cynwise stabbed her hand into a nearby soldier and tore out one of his lungs in the blink of an eye.

Bellatrix was about to turn around when Harry found the chance to fire a spell at her.

The Vampires were upon the military who were now desperately fighting to stay alive.

Wormtail's left hand closed around the nearest head and closed so tight that it was crushed under the pressure while Remus fired reductor curses as quickly as he could, simultaneously dodging swinging branches from Minerva's enchanted ents.

Harry grinned. This was more like it. He exhaled from the effort of shielding the werewolves for so long. "Wipe out the military." He said to Fenrir who grinned maniacally and gestured to his werewolves.

The Barons Black faced off with the Lestranges. Harry would take Bellatrix, Hermione would go against Rudolphus.

This battle was one of skill. There was no variety in their spells, every single one of them was an unforgivable and nobody wasted time on shields that weren't rock or otherwise physical.

"I thought you would have wanted to play a bit." Harry remarked as he brought up a rock wall in front of him and jumped to his left to fire a shot at Rudolphus.

"Tonight is very important and I want to be a part of what my lord is doing. I don't want to waste time with you."

Harry dodged two Avadas aimed right at him and was hit a second later by an imperio. "Stand still."

'Stand still...' that calm voice told him.

"Like hell!" Harry yelled verbally as he leapt out of the way of another killing curse which hit an unaware werewolf.

Hermione too was not being kind in her curses but she herself was not above using a few obscure spells she had created, none of which were connecting and because of that small detail, she was starting to become very angry.

Harry drew his sword soundlessly and charged towards Rudolphus who was too busy trying to dodge Hermione's nerve breaker spell to realise.

A searing pain in Hermione's shoulder propelled her forward as a killing curse and a cruciatus flew over her head as she fell forwards.

Harry brought the sword down on Rudolphus' neck who was staring stunned as the sword sliced through his neck, downwards cutting his spine, windpipe, lungs, liver and becoming lodged in his gallbladder.

A green glow out the corner of Harry's eye notified him of the curse that would be on its way towards him in half a second.

Twisting the sword around, Bellatrix' husband was brought right into the line of fire of her own killing curse.

"Rudolphus!" She cried.

Harry likewise ran to Hermione who lay bleeding on the ground; a bullet wound to her shoulder.

"Hermione love, are you alright? Can you move?"

"Oh god it hurts!" She cried.

"We've got to get you out of here." He said, stealing a glance at Bellatrix who was cradling the body of her husband which was almost in two halves.

She seemed to sense him looking and stared back at him, a cold rage burning in her eyes.

She placed her dead husband on the ground as Harry got up from his crouch and stood between Harry and Hermione.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Around them, the battle waged on, with the cooperation of the werewolves and vampires, the military were being massacred.

The lycans were shocked at the help being given to them by their undead enemies, but the vampires made no move to attack the werewolves, instead too concerned about the helicopters flying around shooting chainguns at them.

"Accio... Uhhh... big green flying thing!" Remus called and was caught completely off guard when he realised it was heading towards him rotors first when one of McGonagall's ents stepped in the way and got carved into toothpicks a second before the helicopter exploded.

Cynwise was surveying the carnage around her, the sword of Gryffindor stained with the blood of thirty or forty soldiers.

Beside her, Luna kneeled down and punctured a soldier's jugular vein and stuck a straw in it which caused raised eyebrows from the elder vampires around them.

"That is your 'Last Dark Lord'?" Dotworth asked as he watched Harry stand defensively in front of Hermione, reading his opponent for her next move. His opponent was speaking softly that they couldn't hear. "He pales in comparison to the one against him, but he does have a certain viciousness about him and those werewolves do follow him quite loyally."

"She has an unnatural limit to her magic, my Lord has only his natural limit for now. Wait until after this battle and when you speak with him; you will see what kind of leader he is."

Dotworth nodded as he noted that most vampires were finished with the marines and were just watching the scene in front of them.

"We will withdraw. Consider my debt paid to you Cynwise, and for blood's sake girl, see about training that underling of yours. It's just not kosher to drink blood with a straw, and... and... is that an umbrella up his nose?"

Luna nodded.

Uncle Dotty closed his eyes and turned his head. "We withdraw."

As the vampires appeared to evaporate from the scene, Luna and Cynwise looked to Harry and Hermione.

Luna moved forward to help them, but Cynwise told her to stop.

"This is their fight. We shall finish off the soldiers and help with the wounded."

The younger wanted to protest, but against a direct order, all she could do was look longingly at them.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Hermione pushed herself upwards with her good arm and yelped in pain at the movement of her right arm.

"You killed my husband Harry Potter." Bellatrix said coldly.

"Yes, I did." He replied coolly. "We both knew that at least two of us would die tonight."

"You were the one supposed to die! So that my lord could live on and rule this world! Rudolphus and I were supposed to be thanked by him for removing the final obstacle to his immortality! Now I'll have to go alone."

'So, Dumbledore leaked the prophecy did he?' Harry mused.

"You'll get thanked by him once you're both 6 foot under." Harry said as he moved his sword into an attack position and held his left hand at the ready.

Harry ran towards her and didn't flinch as her magic flared. He brought his sword down where he knew she would be despite the brightness that surrounded him.

His blade sliced through nothing and he overbalanced.

"Crucio!" Said five voices, all belonging to the same person and Harry was hit by the spells in his back.

One cruciatus was painful, three were just unthinkable. His back arched upwards, threatening to snap his own spine from the pain. He was barely aware that he was not the only person screaming.

Hermione too writhed under the effect of two cruciatus. She had seen Bellatrix suddenly become seven instances of herself, each of which she learned a second later were capable of casting their own spells.

She curled into a foetal position and desperately tried not to scream. She wouldn't give Bellatrix the pleasure.

"Scream!" Bellatrix yelled at her. "SCREAM DAMN YOU!"

Another of her doppelgangers picked Hermione up by her hair while she was still being hit by the curse and very roughly poked a finger into the hole in her shoulder where the bullet wound was and wriggled it around.

Hermione couldn't take it any more and she screamed. The pain continued until she threatened to black out, and then the stimuli stopped and she dropped to the floor.

The idle instance walked up to Harry who lay on the floor groaning and grabbed his sword.

She looked down at her prey and without so much as a hand movement or a whisper, Harry's eyes glassed over.

The residue pain from the combined cruciatus made it impossible for Harry to disobey her.

"Sit up." Bellatrix commanded. "Finite." The doppelgangers turned to dust and Harry got up from the floor and kneeled down, his back straight as a ruler.

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a husband for a husband, Baron Black." Bellatrix said coldly as she raised the sword high into the air, aiming for his neck at the same angle Harry had killed Rudolphus.

Hermione willed her body to move, but she couldn't.

'Please move. I have to save Harry! Move damnit!'

Bellatrix smiled triumphantly as she swung the sword downwards.

That was when a bang resounded over the area and one side of Bellatrix' head exploded, splattering her brains across the ground and flinging her a metre to the left of where she was, Harry's sword flew through the air and landed blade first into his own leg. He very quickly snapped out of his trance with the death of his controller and screamed anew at his wound.

Fenrir Greyback looked back at where Bellatrix fell. Upon the end of their battle with the military he had taken to looking after his wounded. He was pissed off because Remus Lupin had saved him, but it looked like it was all over.

Seventy of his werewolves were dead, another fifty wounded. It was hard for him to admit, but if not for those accursed vampires, they would have all been dead.

McGonagall lay, dying on the ground, having taken a bullet wound to her lung. Merlin did he hate that woman too, the amount of anguish she had caused him in school. But she too had come to their rescue and so he was doing everything he could to keep her alive.

Remus Lupin was sitting down on a piece of stone thinking. He had never taken someone's life before, but tonight he had. There was no mistaking the silver knife that would have easily lopped Greyback's head off of his shoulders, but as one werewolf to another, you just couldn't let that happen.

There was a bit of movement out to one side and Remus frowned. "Accio rat." Pettigrew flew into his hand. "Arrestum Tempus." Remus was only just strong enough to cast the spell, but the fact that it was so small meant that he didn't faint from the pull of magic it caused to manipulate time.

Pettigrew's fate would be decided by everyone at Harry's cave.

Ahead of him, he could see a man walking towards him holding a long stick.

"What took you so long?" He asked with a wry smile.

Knight nodded back to him. "I needed to pick up a few toys that I'd hidden so well I almost came back without them. I'm glad I didn't."

"What is that?"

"This?" He said waving the stick around. "This is called a L118A1 sniper rifle. A muggle friend of mine pilfered it somehow. Never asked him how, but he seemed to think I could hide it better than he could. I'm glad it came in handy."

"I think I learnt more about muggles tonight than any other night in my life." Remus said disdainfully.

"We need to see about getting everybody back to the cave."

"Everybody?"

"Everybody. The Dark Lord knows exactly where the werewolves are hiding, so we need to take them back to the cave for their own protection. Then I'm going to need your help to kidnap a few doctors from St. Mungos."

Remus nodded.

"We'll come back for the bodies after that."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry ground his teeth in pain. He wrapped his fingers around the hilt of the sword and screamed as it moved, cutting him a little more. Because he had been kneeling when Bellatrix was about to bring the sword down on him, the flying sword had pierced straight through both his thigh and calf.

Yanking the weapon upwards it sliced further down his wounds but managed to pull it completely from his leg which spewed blood. "OH GOD!" He screamed, tears streaming down his face.

Luna stepped towards Hermione, who looked up at her, pleading.

"Everybody is leaving this place." She said serenely. "Will you be able to portkey home?"

Hermione nodded.

"Knight and Remus will be getting us a few healers, we'll take care of your wounds there, alright?"

Hermione reached into her robe and touched her portkey. She disappeared from view shortly after.

One by one everybody was being evacuated from the site and Cynwise joined Luna in confronting Harry who was trying to use his sword as a crutch to get up.

"Oh no..." He whimpered as he saw the death and carnage around him. "What have I done?"

"You were still under contract with the Dark Lord." Cynwise told him matter of factly. "It is only now that you are free to do as you wish."

"I still shouldn't have come. Hermione and I both knew it was a trap." He muttered softly, then regarded Cynwise for a moment and appraised the little girl. "If not for you both bringing the vampires, we would have been dog food. Thank you." He placed his free hand on her head and messed up her hair.

The two vampires looked at each other sympathetically and let there be silence between them.

"Dobby has a milkshake waiting for you at home." Luna informed him, having just come from there a moment ago.

Harry laughed, despite his feelings.

"Go home Master." Cynwise told him. "We're finished here."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry's mood did not improve when he made it back to his cave where Hermione was revealing the fidelius secret to them all. There were wounded bodies everywhere in the cave except their personal bedroom and bathroom. The training hall had werewolves head to toe and Hermione had shrunk her fingers to make more room.

So many bodies in fact that Remus and Knight had gone out of their way to put six healers under the imperious and dragged them to the cave in order to deal with as many people as possible before giving them instructions and promptly apparating away to pick up dead bodies.

In the healers instructions Greyback had given them were to deal with Harry and Hermione first, followed by McGonagall. The werewolves, being werewolves would heal much faster than the humans and were generally in much less danger than the humans.

Harry's leg was bandaged and he was confined to his own bed, separate from Hermione. He had complained, but the healer was quite adamant that for a while, any movement of his legs could cause him to open the wound again.

Hermione too was bedridden for a while and would find herself in a sling for days to come.

Together, they asked the healers to put Minerva in their room with them.

Harry spent time alone with his thoughts, cursing himself for the nights events.

Fenrir Greyback imposed himself on the Barons Black and stared for a while at the pathetic couple. He personally thanked his lucky stars he came out of the battle completely unscathed.

"You did a good job tonight Baron." He said. "You planned as best you could, and when the chips were down, you didn't just protect your own skin. You're a real friend of the lycans."

"So many of them died tonight." Hermione whispered, demonstrating that she too had been thinking about it as much as Harry.

"Believe me, they wouldn't have gone down without taking more than a couple of muggles with them. The trai- Remus... has been collecting bodies, we're grateful for that."

"How are the wounded?" Harry asked.

"The healers are doing well, they've managed to stabilise a few of the criticals. We've had two die while waiting on assistance." He said sadly. "I'll never forgive the Dark Lord for what he did tonight."

"Nor will we." Hermione said.

"I just..." Fenrir said. "I wanted to say thanks, and ask if we could impose on you until we find somewhere to stay that he doesn't know about."

Harry and Hermione very quickly agreed. "It's the least we can do."

With that, Fenrir left their presence.

"We really bit off more than we could chew..." Harry said softly.

"I was so scared." Hermione replied distantly. "I never want to feel like that again."

"I feel the same." Harry said. "I don't want you to ever leave me."

They both stared into each other's eyes from their beds.

"I've been thinking..." Harry said finally. "I'm thinking about settling down for a bit and getting away from this war. We could stay here in this cave, get married, perhaps... have a few children. They'd be safe here, away from Dumbledore and Voldemort."

"You're not just saying you want this for the power of that potion are you?"

"No." Harry replied. "But the thing is... I want to have a family before I face Voldemort and kill him or die trying. Perhaps with that potion I'd have a chance, but I'd want to wait until the kids are grown up."

Hermione smiled and reached out with her left hand towards him. Harry too reached out with his right and they held hands. "Will you marry me?" He asked seriously.

Hermione smiled. "I already said I would didn't I?"

"Yeah, you did... but I don't think I really asked you properly." He smiled.

"Yes Harry, I'll marry you,"

Minerva listened on and hid her own smile.

.o'OoOoO'o.

An hour earlier, in London.

"Aragh!" The last wizard fell to the ground with a slouch, a pool of blood pooled around the Dark Lord's bare feet.

"Your majesty." He sneered. "I would like to commend you for serving your country so well for so long. I really do think that it's time that you retired however."

"Dark Lord Voldemort, even if you kill me, you will never be able to destroy the royal bloodline. You will be hunted down and killed."

Voldemort laughed shrilly. "They will not need to hunt me. I shall be sitting right here, in this room and every one of their heads will be lined on the wall as a reminder that they cannot kill me. There is only one brat who could kill me, and by now that brat is lying face down in the mud with no more life than your children or great grandchildren.

The Queen raised her hand to her heart as it thundered in her chest.

"Let us end this banter. I am eager to take my rightful place. Avada Kedavra."

She slumped to the ground, dead.

Voldemort ascended the steps to where she lay and picked her crown off of her head and tried to place it on his own. The crown shot lightning at him and flew across the room.

"So I'm not allowed to wear it am I?" Voldemort sneered. "That doesn't matter. Mulciber, have a duplicate made immediately. I want my replacement crown by tomorrow."

Lucius Malfoy entered the room with his team of Death Eaters behind him. "It is done my lord. The Parliament is nothing anymore, we have crippled this country."

"And by now Bellatrix and Rudolphus will have wiped out the military, Harry Potter and his star-crossed are dead, everything is perfect."

Voldemort was a very happy man indeed.

"Bring me the girl."

Lucius Malfoy bowed. "It will be done my king." He disappeared.

"Ah Lucius, you really do like to suck up to me don't you? But I really do like the ring of that." Voldemort mused. "Yes, from now on, I shall have you all call me that."

"Yes my king!" The death eaters all chorused.

"Start hunting down the rest of the royal family. Where is Wormtail?"

"Nobody has seen him my king. He never appeared with us at Parliament."

"What? Ah, no matter. If we are lucky, the stupid rat splinched himself."

Voldemort raised his hand and summoned forth goblets into the hands of everybody present.

"A toast!"

"A toast!" Everyone chorused.

"To me!"

"Long live King Voldemort!"

Author's note:

I won't want anybody to think that I had abandoned this story, but the break between chapters proved to me that reading too many fluffy stories is not conducive to writing large scale battle scenes like the one in this chapter.

I was overly concerned that this chapter would not be well recieved due to the general lack of creative spells truth be told I'm having troubles thinking of new stuff in that regard.

It might surprise some people to know that originally, Bellatrix was going to defect to Harry's side, and the main enemy of this chapter was actually going to be Susan Bones. I really wanted to have someone over powerful there, but the more I thought about it, the more I realised that having Susan there would just be too weird if I hadn't hinted stuff in the past, soooo... Goodbye Bellatrix.

The next chapter is probably the one most people are waiting for. If I haven't already, I'm going to have to up the story rating for this next chapter, but take it easy on me would you, I've never written sex scenes before.

--Steven

PS. I also found that I have a hard time writing warehouse. I tend to write it as werehouse, which brings to mind some interesting mental imagery.

Omake #4:Preview of next chapter's wedding

The church was packed. Standing room only. The most notable thing about this wedding was that nobody present actually knew the bride and groom. The people in this town just loved weddings. Well, they did now that they were under the imperious.

The groom stood up the front in a suave black tuxedo, sporting glasses and a scar on his forehead, feeling very nervous.

Harry had thought that marriage was a huge barrier in a relationship, and today, he would see about climbing over that wall to see what was on the other side.

As he waited for the groom, the priest leaned over to him and asked, "So, tell me again how you managed to con me into this?"

"Come now my Lord" Harry said soothingly. "Now that you're king of England, who better to marry us?"

"I've got no objection to marrying you off potter, but what is with this dress! You would dress up this world's most powerful dark lord in HOT PINK?"

"Hey, you lost at exploding snap and I have your wizards oath to say you'd do whatever I asked."

"This is so embarrassing."

The music started and after a moment, Harry bore witness to Hermione stepping down the aisle with Remus holding her arm.

When she got to the dias, she stepped up and stood opposite.

Voldemort cleared his throat. "Dearly departed!"

"Nobody is dead!" Minerva snapped.

The dark lord glared at her and she squeaked as he shouted "Avada Kedavra" which went just over her shoulder and killed the muggle behind her.

"As I was saying... We are here today to bear witness to the blessed matrimony of Harold James Potter to Hermione Jane Granger. If there is any here who object to this union, I dare you to voice your opinion now."

"I OBJECT!" A familiar voice called from the back of the room.

Albus Dumbledore strode forwards. "I have a contract here that says Harry was betrothed before birth to one Ginerva Weasley!"

He stood in front of Harry and stared him down for a moment.

"Albus Dumbledore" Voldemort said frostily, almost as if his name in itself were a challenge.

"Now not madam." Dumbledore said, giving the dark lord a brief glance.

Albus did a double-take and looked back at Voldemort in his hot pink dress, complete with lipstick. "Sweet Merlin!" he cried and put his wand to his own head. "Obliviate!"

Harry, Hermione and Voldemort shared a look before shrugging. Voldemort called to the crowd, "Does anybody else have any complaints about this marriage?"

Chapter 11 - Ignorance is Bliss

The Dark Lord Voldemort kicked the remains of a werewolf that had not been collected the night before. 'There are not enough werewolves carcasses here. It looks as if many of them were removed from here.' He mused to himself with a scoff.

"Here she is!"

Voldemort seemed to be there in an instant, picking up what was left of Bellatrix' body. For a very short moment, an emotion, possibly sadness or anger flickered across his face.

Using his wand, he flicked a series of movements, but said nothing. The Death Eaters around him watched in amazement as the ground seemed to become dark beneath them and before them they saw an illusion of Bellatrix standing above Harry.

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a husband for a husband, Baron Black." Her voice rang clear as she brought the sword down and then she was being thrown across the ground.

Voldemort scowled. The sword going through Harry's leg did little to improve his mood. Especially since the brat was still alive.

The scene faded away. Bellatrix' body contained no memory further than that.

"My lord..." Avery said approaching him. He held out his hand to his master and Voldemort reached to take whatever it was being handed to him.

Voldemort was caught off-guard to have a hand full of dust placed in his hands.

There was a tell-tale aura faintly coming off the dust, giving away what it used to be. Voldemort cursed Potter under his breath. 'So, the vampires have chosen to help him out have they? They'll pay for this treason.'

"We return home. There is nothing more to do here. Bring the LeStrange bodies. We shall see about reanimating them. She would want that." He commanded them, ignoring the fact that Bellatrix had hated inferi with a vengeance.

.o'OoOoO'o.

"How much further back do you think we can go?" Harry asked.

Remus shrugged. "Truth be told Harry, I'm not so sure this is such a good idea."

"We've got to do something for them Remus." Harry replied hotly as he gently massaged his leg. It was bound tightly and the potions had done their job overnight, but was told not to use the leg more than necessary for a three weeks and handed him a pair of crutches.

"I'm not saying that we shouldn't." The lycan replied. "I just don't think this is the right answer."

"I'm open for suggestions." He replied hotly.

"Minerva and I were going to dig us our own caves nearby, with your help, we could do the same for each of the werewolves and put the whole mountain under the fidelius."

Hermione stared at Remus gobsmacked. "Remus, are you out of your mind!? A whole mountain? What makes you think I could do that?" She asked him in annoyance. "And don't you think the muggles would notice a mountain going missing from their satellite?"

"What's a satellite?" He asked in reply. Then shook his head, disallowing himself from getting side-tracked. "No, I don't care. The fact is that between the two of you, you could each do half a mountain."

"Make it a quarter and you're being more realistic I think."

"Wow, you can do a quarter of a mountain?" Remus asked surprised.

"Weren't you just saying...?" Harry started then realised he'd been tricked. "OOOOHH! Remus!" Harry raised his crutch to hit the man.

"I was kidding!" He cried.

"I do think it is a good idea, however difficult." Hermione said. "Harry would be able to cover more area than I would but in a worst case scenario, we can always have multiple secrets. Can you do the fidelius Harry?"

Harry shook his head. "Teach me after we get some caves built."

"Perhaps we should also take the opportunity to build a few other facilities such as a holding cell and kitchen." Harry mused. "Knight might know some of the spells they used for Azkaban..."

"I doubt it." Remus replied. "From what I've heard he was little more than a guard there."

"Well, we'll organise something. Let's speak with the werewolves then and get some input from them about how they'd like some homes."
.o'OoOoO'o.

The werewolves were initially not easy for Fenrir to manage. A number of them were angry at Harry for leading them into a trap when he himself knew about it. Those who appreciated what the Barons had done for them argued that he wasn't sure it was a trap.

When the argument was over, fifteen of them had left the pack and went to try to join Voldemort again. Only one of them survived and that was because they brought news that Draco Malfoy was still alive, stuck on the walls of the Baron's walls, but as none of them were able to give Voldemort any idea of where they were living except that there were mountains and trees around which didn't really narrow down Norway much.

It had come as a shock to Harry when he found the rat on the wall as he knew he hadn't stuck it there but the feeling of mystery didn't last long as Remus owned up to it the moment he was queried.

The Barons became very popular rather quickly and they heard a lot of news that they didn't want to hear.

After the presence of Bellatrix was revealed that night, Harry naturally knew it was Peter Pettigrew to blame. There was nobody else to blame for allowing the information of their attack to be leaked to Voldemort. It was a mystery to Harry why Wormtail had stayed to help when he had the chance to escape, so Harry had a hard time fathoming exactly what his goals were.

A half-baked answer came when Knight returned from spying on the nights events.

He had explained the events leading up to the call to arms, including Voldemort's plans to attack the royalty of England and completely circumvent the Ministry of Magic who now, were try to sever all ties with the muggle world so as to not be influenced by Voldemort, but with the Dark Lord's minions already in the ministry, this proved to be difficult and the beginnings of a political uproar was beginning.

Wormtail, Knight said, hadn't exactly defected, but he had fought under his own steam; presumably to try to right the wrongs he had caused against Harry. The Baron didn't believe it for a second.

Hermione however didn't give a rat's arse about Wormtail, she was trying to figure out how in one night, Voldemort had managed to completely overwhelm and take out one of the most important figureheads in the world. Her subconscious already had the answer without her thinking much; the Barons had kept the military out of it.

If the military had gotten wind of what was going on, they would have completely overwhelmed the Death Eaters. Instead, Voldemort had positioned himself as the new overlord of Great Britain and was just awaiting a new crown to complete the ceremony.

Harry asked if Knight knew what was going on with the military now, but Knight had limited time to find out those details, but promised he'd look into it when he was next out.

The werewolves were very attuned to the idea of building caves nearby and the protection of a fidelius meant that the children and those that no longer wanted to fight had somewhere to stay.

Harry voiced a concern over the amount of food that was available for that many werewolves.

Remus suggested it might not be a problem in the immediate future because of the forests around the mountains but Fenrir grinned mysteriously and told them not to be concerned, the issue was well in hand.

Instead, Fenrir's main concern was isolating the werewolves so they didn't attack each other or "you rogues" on the full moon as they were now lacking the funds and a competent potions master to brew Wolfsbane.

'The Rogues' was a term that the werewolves had coined the band that followed the Barons, and since nobody went out of their way to stop them from using the name, it stuck.

This problem of the full moon turned out to be a tricky issue and it gave Harry, Hermione and a team of werewolves two weeks to develop a ward that was completely intangible under normal circumstances, but when the moonbeams of a full moon touched the ward, it would become a solid barrier strong enough to keep the werewolves inside. The process was a learning experience for them because it was nothing like developing a new spell to cause death and destruction.

Likewise, the insides of the caves needed to be charmed so that the werewolves couldn't dig themselves out or even worse, cause a cave in that would bury them alive.

It was certainly a task that without proper thought could have easily gone wrong and perfectly illustrated why it was not a good idea to house the werewolves in the main cave.

So it was that they built a small community with the werewolves.

Cynwise and Luna had no longer become a major problem for Harry to deal with as they found themselves quite content to play with the group of twenty to thirty children suffering from Lycanthropy which in turn helped improve relations between the impression of vampires amongst the werewolves.

Still, when Cynwise was feeling grown up, she would help out the werewolves with their caves and sneaking into their old homes to retrieve gear.

When Remus and McGonagall were bored, they would each apparate to random towns and look for a justice of the peace to marry their young Lord, but it was actually Cynwise who found the solution.

When posed with the question "What exactly does marriage mean to you?" Harry went into a process of deep thought and mumbled about promises, oaths, kisses and a justice of the peace which, when translated for Cynwise, became "A really important person."

Cynwise of course knew exactly what a justice of the peace was and just wanted him to get rid of the muggle implication so that she could tell him she'd already talked Uncle Dotty into organising it for them.

"Married by a vampire?" Hermione asked incredulously. "Well, I suppose stranger things have happened. It might be interesting."
.o'OoOoO'o.

Cynwise had an ulterior motive in having them wedded by vampires. She needed to facilitate a meeting between Harry and organise an alliance between them. What she hadn't realised was that the vampires had already chosen where their loyalties lie.

Harry quite liked meeting the old vamp. It was a much more pleasant experience than sitting down with Voldemort.

Smart fellow too; as soon as the Barons arrived with Cynwise and Luna, the two vampires were directed to where a couple of other vampires with the same childish affliction were, allowing Dotworthy to speak alone with Harry and Hermione.

Dotworthy gave the impression that he was more of a butler than a leader. He was tall, a simple moustache trimmed nicely, a monacle and looked rather stiff.

He led them to a large botanic garden with some of the most unusual trees. Many of them had white leaves that were little more than an outline of a leaf.

The trunks of the trees all looked decayed and withered. Occasionally, every now and then was a Japanese Sakura blossom, an old English oak or another tree that characterised a certain country.

Upon seeing their unanswered question, Dotworthy spoke for the first time. "This place is a vampiric wonder of the world. In the fourteenth century, a vampire botanist created this garden of undead plants. Unfortunately he was killed in the sixteenth century and took the secret of these plants with him."

"Incredible." Hermione mumbled, observing, but not touching the plants.

"We owe you a great deal of thanks." Harry said earnestly to the man.

"You owe us nothing." He observed. "It was an opportunity to pay off a debt that Cynwise has hung over my head for the last two hundred years."

Harry gave a questioning look, but no explanation was forthcoming. As much as Harry found himself really wanting to know how Cynwise had achieved a debt that had allowed her to call upon so many vampires to aid them at Erskine, it seemed rude to vocally pursue that information.

"Well we appreciate it. I'm sure that it will cause a lot of problems with Voldemort."

"The problem we have with Voldemort is in Voldemort's own nature. We were hesitant to enter an agreement with him to start with. I believe his terms of agreement were 'I shall allow you all the pleasure of serving me.' That arrogant fool. We would have joined him if

nothing more than to improve our own life when he won as we had little doubt that he would until that brat Cynwise showed up talking about the Last Dark Lord. Then it was clear what we had to do."

Harry was mildly surprised by what he was saying. After all, any information the vampires had on him was second-hand information unless they had been at the meeting after the murder of Augustus Longbottom.

"Cynwise had told us repeatedly that there is no mistake that you are the one we should be putting our faith in and while I would never say it to her face, I do trust her judgement, but I want to hear it from your mouth as it is a little hard to believe. Are you, a wizard of mediocre strength, really the Last Dark Lord?"

Harry thought on the question for little more than a moment. "I am, yes."

"Do not be concerned by Harry's lack of power," Hermione quipped from beside him. "The issue is being addressed."

"It pleases me to hear that." Dotworthy replied. "It will be difficult to rally complete support from the other vampires while you present the image of such a weak wizard."

Harry scowled and Dotworthy caught the look. Half a second later, he was standing behind the young Baron.

Hermione had barely seen him move and if not for the previous sentence, she would have dashed to Harry's side to help. But she knew from what the vampire had said that this was a test.

Harry ducked to avoid the elbow that would have snapped his spine in half and pulled on the hilt of his sword, hitting the vampire in the groin. Spinning around, he fired an expelliarmus at him, sending him backwards, but before the vamp ever hit the ground, he was standing in front of Harry again, drawing his own sword.

Moving faster than Harry knew he could, he fully unsheathed his sword and blocked the vampire.

"Not bad for a human."

Harry blocked another shot, working purely on reaction. However the vampire had hundreds of years of experience that Harry did not.

He twisted his head to avoid getting the blade through his head and wondered if the master of the vampire clan truly was trying to kill him, but deep down he already knew that answer. If he couldn't hold Dotworthy at bay, there was no way he would get the respect of the other vampires.

More than likely, the vampire had intended to demonstrate exactly how weak Harry was to prove his point. Hermione mused as she watched the swordplay progress

After a couple more nicks to his body, Harry grinned. Dotworthy may have had hundreds of years of experience but Harry had the advantage of magic.

Using his left hand, he released his magic and called upon a hasty 'protego'. He barely had enough time to perform it correctly and ended up with a very small shield that blocked the sword and shattered, allowing the blade to shallowly cut into Harry's hand.

Dotworthy stared at him in surprise, his eyes wondering to the sword resting against his neck.

"I could cut your head off now and in the time it took you to regenerate it, I could pierce your heart easily."

"Yes, you could."

They lowered their weapons and Harry looked disgustedly at his hand. If his protego had been any weaker he would have lost the top half of it. He ran a cauterizing charm over the cut and looked at the shaken Vampire.

"It would appear that I completely underestimated you." Dotworthy had intended to kill him of course, but he had not expected that Harry

would create an opportunity to turn the tables as he had. He had been careless.

"Perhaps you did, I might have lost if you had a way to test my magical power, but even then you wouldn't have an accurate picture of what I am capable of as I do not rely on my magic exclusively and I do not rely on my sword either.

"You're lucky that this was a test otherwise you would have found yourself impaled by a wooden stake from my fiancée." Harry replied.

Dotworthy had forgotten about her and looked at her cold, hard face. She was not impressed by the impromptu test.

"You have convinced me Baron Black, but you will need to demonstrate an amazing ability to the other vampires in order to rally them collectively under your banner. We vampires live by the idea that actions speak louder than words, and a truly impressive speech will not move stone hearts such as ours."

"Once we've completed our ritual, I'm sure we'll be able to manage something."

"Very well. Then let us speak of the matter that Cynwise brought you before me for. I have one vampire who also moonlights as a muggle priest for late night sermons. He is fully capable of marrying you in the muggle world as well as wizarding."

Harry sniggered, and upon being asked what he thought was so funny, replied that it was amusing that the stereotypical vampire from a muggle movie could not enter a church or walk upon "Hallowed Ground" as he had heard in one particular movie. The old man sniffed in distaste and reached for his neck.

"I can organise this for you," Dotworthy said, rubbing his neck as if trying to reaffirm that it hadn't been lopped off. "But I have terms and conditions for this service."

Harry sighed. Everybody had terms and conditions for everything. But as he was learning, that was just simply the way the world worked.

Nobody did anything if there was nothing to gain from it, doubly so in the world of politics.

"We're listening."

The leader of the vampires impressed upon them the importance of giving an impression to the vampires that the Last Dark Lord and his wife were not weak by any means. The wedding was to be conducted in front of an audience of vampires and would be used as a foundation for proving that the two of them would be a pillar of strength for the vampiric community worldwide.

The concept completely confounded Harry. To him, he had seen a couple of weddings from afar and all he could see were women crying and saying how beautiful it was. The idea of such a... a 'masculine', for lack of a better word, wedding seemed rather foreign.

He looked towards Hermione with eyebrows raised and asked what she thought of it.

"I'm okay with the idea in theory, but before I commit myself to the idea I want to hear exactly what you have in mind. But I am not averse to using a reductio ad absurdum to juice an apple."

Dotworthy postponed the meeting until he could get the priest in on the meeting to discuss things.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry sighed and looked at the list of ingredients required for the potion. It was a long list that made him shudder every time he read it. He really didn't want to put it in his mouth, but he needed a full sixteen doses of it, taken every 6 hours.

Hermione and Harry would take their last dose shortly after the wedding it was decided.

"May as well consummate your wedding with a bang." Remus had suggested mischievously. McGonagall was not impressed, but neither Harry nor Hermione said anything to suggest they wouldn't do it.

Harry frowned at the thought. It would take two months to make the potion and with the priest being rather open ended as to when the wedding would take place, it was left to the Barons to organise whatever they needed beforehand.

He started looking over his list of ingredients of what he needed and what he would need to get.

With a wave of his wand, he went to check and make sure that the ashes he'd gotten from Fawkes were enough.

Lifting the lid, he got quite a shock. The ashes were missing. Completely gone.

"Something the matter?" The Sorting Hat asked as he stepped into the study room to get a book.

"Yeah." He grumbled. "Someone has stolen my phoenix ash."

"Oh yeah, sorry about that, Remus and Minerva took it to put in the potion."

"They WHAT!?" Harry threw the pot on the ground in anger, shattering it and grabbed the hat from its peak. "You asked them to start making it didn't you?"

"I knew that eventually you'd come around. They've been working on it ever since the prophecy; it just needs the two sacrifices."

"Oh am I going to have words with them." Harry said darkly, "And YOU are going to stop suggesting things to people without my knowing."

"Yes my Lord." The hat said unabashed.

Harry simmered as he strode to the front door, not seeing Hermione poke her head out of the bathroom and mutter a drying charm. "Harry?"

"Accio Minerva, Accio Remus!" He called out, releasing his magic to its fullest extent.

It took a few seconds before he heard a pair of screams heading straight for him. His anger was quickly diffused as he realised exactly how stupid it was to do that when first his ex-transfiguration teacher and then his ex-defence teacher both bowled into him, knocking him winded onto the floor.

"Mister Potter! That is just rude! You can't just summon people like that!"

"Given the fact that you're both petty thieves, I don't see why I can't!" Harry shouted at them.

"What are you talking about?"

"Don't play dumb. My potions ingredients are missing, some particularly rare ones."

"You're not accusing us are you?"

"The ones that are missing are suspiciously present on this list!" He said shoving the parchment with the potion on it in their faces.

"Oh." They both said, looking guilty.

"Oh is right!"

Harry stared them down as if they were a pair of kids who had just stolen candy from Zonkos. "It's bad enough that you went and made this potion for yourselves, but you're both grown adults and you are able to think for yourselves. If I wanted to take that potion, I would have made it for myself!"

"What do you have to say for yourselves!?"

"Uhh... the Hat made us do it."

"So much for being able to think for yourselves." Harry grumbled as his anger seeped out of him. Yelling at them didn't change much, but punishing them would certainly make him feel better. After thinking about it, he decided that the two of them would go and raid Lucius Malfoy's house and liberate all the books from it.

They both looked surprised at the 'punishment' when Harry explained that he needed a decent wedding gift to give to Hermione. He summoned his father's invisibility cloak and handed it to Remus.

"Before you go... Where is this potion? Is it safe to bring it here?" The teenager asked them.

Minerva nodded.

"Bring it here. Are you both sure you made it perfectly?"

"It's perfect Harry." Remus told him. "Cynwise, Luna and Knight helped make sure it was stirred properly at the correct times."

Harry sighed, defeated. "So you were all in on it?"

"The only thing any of us weren't willing to do was force it down your throats."

"I would have kicked your arses. Go on, get out of here." He said with a smile as he waved them out of his home.

Hermione came out of her hiding spot. "You know Harry, if you're going to give a girl a surprise gift, you really ought to wait until she's out of earshot."

Harry turned on the spot and saw Hermione with nothing but a towel on, wrapped around her body, but leaving little to imagination.

"Oh damn." Harry said. "I thought you were still in the bath." Then stupidly added afterwards, "Wow..."

"You've waited this long Harry Potter, you can wait a little longer."

"I really regret those words now you know."

Hermione smiled. "I'll take that as a compliment."

"Great..." Harry said with a fake grimace. "Everybody is taking stuff from me..." He glanced over to check that nobody had stolen his sword.

"Then allow me to further steal a kiss." She said, placing her lips upon his.

Remus and McGonagall appeared a second later with a large golden cauldron. Harry wondered where they'd gotten their hands on such a cauldron but Remus said that Knight had stolen it from the Dark Lord and framed Severus for it by putting a few drops of grease on the ground where it had been. Severus being such an experienced occlumens with too many secrets to keep meant that Voldemort could not check that claim's validity so when it came down to a matter of trust, Severus was punished accordingly.

This news made Harry grin appropriately. Remus had wished Knight had been at Hogwarts at the same time as them, he'd have made a hell of a marauder. "I just know how to cover my arse." Knight had told him with a wink.

"So what's left to be done?"

"It's been ready for a while, we've just been waiting on the two sacrifices, then just add the murtlap and leave to sit until your first dose at 5:34 in the following morning."

Hermione initiated a levitation spell on the cauldron. "Two sacrifices huh?" she muttered as she moved it towards his training hall with everyone following in her wake and sat it down in front of their captives. "I think I know just the redhead for the job." Harry wove his hands wide, activating the anti-apparition and anti-portkey wards before cancelling the three stasis spells and turning the rat back into a human who found his face smudged against the wall.

"Any last words?" Hermione asked.

"Hermione you bitch!" Ron shouted.

"You fucking mudblood!" Draco screamed. "I'm going to feed you to a fucking horntail."

"Do I have to face the wall? I've got sand in my teeth." Wormtail complained.

Hermione grinned. "I was hoping you'd be a bit more creative than that, but I guess it was asking too much of someone with your intelligence levels."

Ron opened his mouth to say something but was silenced before he could even exhale.

"You've said your last words, wasted as they were." She said.

"What are you going to do Potter?" Draco asked him.

Harry grinned and put his arm around Hermione. "Nothing much little ferret. We're just going to cut out a few vital organs for a little potion."

Draco paled. "You're lying! Even the Dark Lord himself would not carelessly use human components in a potion!"

"We're not carelessly using you. There has been a lot of thought put into this." Harry replied. "We'll do anything it takes."

"Even sacrificing a couple of selfish purebloods who seem to think the world should bow down in front of them." Hermione continued. "Ron, before I kill you, I want you to know that you never had a chance of with me. My heart would never belong to you."

Ron smirked.

"Rest assured though, your heart belongs to me now." She said lowly. "Pectus constrictio animus." The spell seemingly had no effect on Ron, and certainly wouldn't have visibly anyway, but when Hermione cut his heart out using a diffindo, she had bound his soul to his heart.

An ethereal scream echoed through the room as she removed his sternum and gently pulled out his heart and took it to the cauldron and squeezed the blood out of it and cleaned it up using a few cutting spells before placing the heart in as well.

Draco had been silenced by Harry the moment he started screaming, even still, his mouth seemed permanently open as he silently prayed for some escape. He started thrashing but he couldn't break the binds that held him to that wall.

The adults present stared on looking mildly green. They had seen death, they had seen gruesome acts, but to watch it happening and trying not to interfere because they felt it needed to be done, but each of them couldn't help but wonder if the means justified the end.

Hermione turned to Draco now, and chanted another incantation, "Mens contritio animus." The purpose of the spell was to bind his soul to his brain. She hesitated for a moment before slicing his skull and trying not to lop off the top of his brain too otherwise they'd need to use Wormtail after all.

Draco's eyes went wide when he felt his cranial bone sliding around and tried biting Hermione's hands when she tried to reach into his skull.

When she tried to go from above, he tilted his head upwards and the bone slid to the floor, complete with his hair and skin still attached.

Everyone just stared at it for a moment before Hermione tried summoning his brain, but Draco had only just enough raw magical power to resist the summons. He could not however, resist Harry trying it and a similar ghostly scream echoed as his soul was ripped from his body.

So it was that Harry held in his hands, Draco Malfoy's brain and tried not to be grossed out. He had held hearts before, but he had never held someone's brain before.

Even Hermione looked a bit green and said gently. "Just slip it in Harry."

"Right, just slip it in." Harry nodded and robotically walked to the cauldron and dumped the brain into the cauldron.

"Now it's just his liver right? Was it the brain person or the heart?"

"Better make it Ron... I don't trust that Malfoy hadn't been drinking before he double-crossed us." Harry said half-seriously.

"Erm... it was the... er... it was the heart donor." Remus said reading from the parchment and trying to look anywhere but at the bodies.

"Right." Hermione said as she extracted the liver from the person who had tried to kill her.

"Are you alright there Wormtail?" Harry asked as he saw a pool of liquid forming around his feet. "You don't need to be worried just yet, you're not apart of this." Harry released the sticking charm on the rat and summoned his wand. "But I thought I'd let you see that before we interrogate you."

"Professor McGonagall, could you please go and get the murlap." Hermione asked as she stirred the potion and watched it turn a sickly green as the body organs floating on top of the potion dissolved. Minerva nodded her head and stepped from the cave quickly, eager to get away from the deformed bodies of two of her students.

"Wait, this isn't right..." But even as she said it, the potion turned a brilliant white. "Oh, there we go... maybe that was supposed to happen..."

"Remus, could you please take Pettigrew to our holding cells. I shall speak to him before the night is over."

Remus nodded.

"And get the man a change of underwear. Scourgify." Harry said screwing up his face.

While Remus was taking Wormtail to the holding cells, Harry looked over his partner's shoulder. "Are you sure that everything is okay?"

"I don't remember reading about that change in colour, but everything seems to be in order now. The colour is perfect."

"I can't believe I'm going to be drinking essence of Ron and Draco." He said with a disgusted look on his face.

"What should we do with their bodies?"

"I suppose we could just dump them in front of the ministry." Harry remarked. "or maybe just leave them in Hogsmeade somewhere."

Minerva returned with the murtlap and gave it to Hermione who added it immediately, stirred it and put a spell to surround the cauldron to stop anybody else from touching it until the morning.

"Tomorrow, Harry and I will start taking this." She said firmly. "Voldemort and Dumbledore are going to regret what they've done."

Their teacher nodded and left them where Harry and Hermione retreated to their study and talked about what was wrong with the world and how they'd going about fixing it.

Harry's earlier declaration that he was without a doubt the Last Dark Lord made Hermione smile. As she teased him about it, Harry just shook his head and admitted that he was just doing what felt right. If he fulfilled a prophecy and there were no further dark lords or the world ended, then that's how it would be. He didn't care, all he wanted at the moment was to pretend that there was nothing wrong with the world and just live with her and the others.

Hermione had to agree with him. She too was feeling worn out by being pushed around by everybody's plans. For now they were both was quite content to let Dumbledore deal with Voldemort while they eloped on a honeymoon.

With Hermione dedicated to fixing the injustices of the world, Knight came in and announced that they now had enough food to last

everyone in their hideaway for a month. The Barons Black balked when they saw the volume of food that was back in his cave. Knight admitted that he and the werewolves had filched it from a muggle warehouse and suddenly Harry felt an urge to obtain a warehouse full of drills from a place called Grunnings, an idea he might put aside for later.

After eating a communal dinner with everyone including their two vampires and Fenrir whom the Blacks had taken a liking to, the troop took a trip down to the relatively new holding cells to visit their resident rat.

Wormtail was looking rather sorry for himself when Harry and Remus approached him.

"Peter." Harry said simply, getting his attention. "What are your intentions Peter?"

He shrugged. "I'm not sure."

"Knight told me he dragged your arse off to our fight when you had your own to fight, yet even left unattended, you still helped us out. Why?"

He shrugged again. "Would my answers change anything? You're going to kill me no matter what I say."

"I would have already if not for the fact that you fought on my side without my asking you to, but regardless of whether I kill you or not, I want to hear for myself why you betrayed my parents."

"I don't know."

Harry's eyes flared. "You don't know!? Do you mean to tell me you just woke up one morning and said 'Nice weather today, I think I might go and have my best friends killed.'!?"

"I'm sorry, that came out wrong. What I meant was, I don't remember." The amendment made Harry pause.

"Explain."

What Peter described was a classic case of Dumbledore obliterating someone to gain something. Harry's parents had gone into hiding using the fidelius and then waited for them to get comfortable before obliterating Pettigrew into thinking he was a Death Eater. A real surprise for him when he went to report to the Dark Lord who had no clue at all who he was and almost had him killed until Wormtail had offered the information Dumbledore had sent him with.

Voldemort had seen through the whole thing and gave him the Dark Mark before briefly explaining Dumbledore's regime to Peter. The news that he had been obliterated had shocked Peter to the core and was given time to digest the news while Voldemort left to kill Lily and James.

By the time that Wormtail had realised what was going on, it was too late to save his friends.

Voldemort never returned that night and while many Death Eaters blamed him, he didn't care so much about that as the fact that he had betrayed his friends.

When Sirius caught up with him, he was still rather dazed and killed the muggles and went into hiding without realising the implications of what it would mean for Sirius. All he had wanted at that point was to hide safely, and the only place that seemed safe for him would be to help Voldemort win. He couldn't sink any lower could he?

When he had finished his story, Harry didn't feel any better about him and neither did Remus.

Moony asked him why he didn't try explaining his way out of it when they'd discovered him, Wormtail answered with another question. "Would you have believed me anyway? Sirius wanted nothing more than to kill me that day. Trying to explain that Dumbledore was manipulating everyone would not have made up for the fact that he spent years in Azkaban that he didn't deserve. Even I know that. If he hadn't escaped I would have set him free when we broke out Bellatrix

and the other death eaters. Then I would have explained it to him and he'd probably still be alive today!"

Peter really had been between a rock and a hard place.

"Here's the deal." Harry said after a while of thought. "If you want to live, you can live. I will even allow you to live here, but don't expect the werewolves to be happy with your presence. You sold them out more than you sold us out."

Fenrir added a growl as if to reinforce the statement.

"If you want to die, I can arrange that to."

"What are you going to do?" Pettigrew asked.

"My plans are my own until you've proven yourself trustworthy enough to hear them." Harry replied stonily.

As Harry turned his head to leave, Peter grabbed his hand. "Harry, I want you to believe me that the only reason I brought the Dark Lord back was because I knew he was the only one who could kill Dumbledore!"

"You're asking me to forgive the middle-man." He replied. "I can't do that. Not while it hurts so much." He looked at Remus. "Let him go, put him up in one of the spare caves if he desires. Fenrir, the werewolves most certainly don't have to be nice to him, but I have given him sanctuary here for now."

"That'll be difficult, but I'm sure that if I threaten them with your wrath it should be fine." He said with a grin.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry and Hermione made a lame attempt at getting some sleep which was not an easy task with thoughts of both Dumbledore and Voldemort having a hand in killing his parents and the fact that soon, his life would change forever more.

In a few days, they would have finished their potion, they'd be married and if all went well, later on he'd be a father, and he'd have the all the power he needed to take down two dark lords and he swore to himself and Hermione in the middle of the night that if any other would-be dark lords cropped up, he'd make sure they were cut down to size before him. His children would grow up in a safe world.

They were awoken by Cynwise before dawn and she told them to make pancakes for her. Harry grumbled in annoyance but still lacerated his arm for her so that she could have her blood-flavoured pancakes for dinner, or breakfast, or whatever it was.

Harry and Hermione each had a more normal breakfast, bathed and changed into fresh clothes and then checked on the potion with both Luna and Cynwise staying up much past their bedtimes to watch the event, the master holding onto her pet Osfrid.

"Any idea what's going to happen when we down these?"

"Not really, I've calculated what the potion will do, but all I know is that you will experience something, but what that something is depends entirely on the person."

Harry nodded and spooned out the first dosage of the potion into a bowl, one for Hermione, one for himself and replaced the spell on the cauldron.

"Bottoms up my love." Harry said as he put the bowl to his lips and downing what felt like 15 blocks of sugar cubes that just glided down his throat. It tasted sickly sweet, yet kind of meaty, and something else that Harry couldn't quite find a definite flavour for. It reminded him of an appetizer, main course, dessert and rat poison all mixed together.

Harry's eye twitched as the last of the mix went down his throat and just like that, he was out like a light bulb, slumped to the floor.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry awoke to find himself in a forest, with soft moss pressed against his naked back. He groaned as if he'd been asleep for hours. His body felt so heavy.

'Where am I?' He wondered. 'Did they screw up making the potion and kill me instead?' It seemed to be the most likely answer.

He tried to breathe in deep, but it was as if the air was so dense it was almost as if he were breathing in a liquid.

Harry pushed himself to his feet and started looking for any sign of life. His afterlife would be rather boring, not to mention lonely if there was nobody else around, especially if Hermione wasn't here too.

What he didn't know however was that he was not alone in this forest. There were a total of three creatures beside him and Harry was walking away from the closest of them. The creature could only really be described as a translucent floating head. It was completely missing it's neck and anything below.

"That bastard Harry..." Ron's voice complained. "What the hell happened to me? Where's my body? How am I supposed to eat properly without my body! Maybe I got splinched."

So Ron's task for the time was to look around the place for his missing body.

Another such creature looked different depending on the perspective. Unlike Ron who, if he had found his body would have found it translucent, the creature would have been almost invisible from Harry's perspective, yet was completely opaque to her own perspective.

"Is this a vision?" Hermione asked herself. "I still feel alive..." She said as she pinched her arm. "Osfrid did say that we'd have an experience, but I don't know if we're supposed to accomplish something or if I'm just supposed to observe..." She mused and figured that whatever she was supposed to do, hanging around in one spot was not going to help.

She wondered around for what felt like days of forest when she heard an unnatural rustling in the leaves. Curious, she moved to where the sound came from and as she pulled the branches back, she heard an inhuman scream and something dashed towards her.

"You bitch! I'll kill you! I'll kill you and Potter both!" Hermione fell backwards in shock as whatever it was flew over her head and when she turned back, she found an almost invisible head rolling around on the ground.

"Draco?" She asked in surprise as the owner of the voice registered in her head.

"You think you can sacrifice me! I don't care if I don't have a body, I'll bite your fucking head off!"

Hermione smirked and reached for her wand, which wasn't there. Nothing was there.

She looked in shock as she realised that she had been in this forest for who knows how long and she only just now realised that she didn't even have a bra or underwear on!

She bit back a scream of embarrassment and instead reached her hand out and called out "Obliterate!"

Draco cringed but nothing happened.

"My magic..!"

Draco grinned nastily as he turned on her. "Even better..."

So Draco dashed towards her and clamped his teeth down on her neck, tearing muscle and sinew away, leaving Hermione desperately trying to pull him off unsuccessfully until she passed out from a lack of blood.

Meanwhile, Harry was climbing a tree, trying to ascertain his position. As he poked his head out of the canopy and looked around, all he

could see was trees, all the same height that looked almost like a floor you could walk on for as far as the eyes could see.

As he looked around, he noticed that in one direction, there appeared to be a wall that extended as high as the heavens and reached infinitely in either direction. Harry thought that would be a good place to go for, even if it did mean backtracking and cursed himself for not checking in the first place.

So Harry set off, not caring how long it took to reach.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry sat bolt upright, sweating. "I'm not dead..."

He was back in his cave, lying on the floor next to the cauldron.

Hermione wasn't far from him; she was shivering and holding her neck.

Harry subconsciously reached for his heart and felt to make sure that it wasn't eaten or otherwise missing.

"Wow, what happened? You both look scared as sheep." Cynwise asked.

"How... how long were we out for?"

Cynwise smiled. "About five minutes."

Harry was surprised, but said nothing. "Are you alright love?" He asked his fiancée.

Hermione nodded. "I think I was killed by Draco Malfoy."

"Yeah, Ron got me." Harry affirmed. "What did you see?"

Hermione described the same forest that Harry was in as much detail as she could remember, leaving nothing out.

Harry was surprised that she was naked, but thinking back, he realised that he had been too, Harry was able to expound on what she had said by talking about what he saw above the trees.

They were each a bit shaky but realised that it had been little more than a vision.

"I was hoping there'd be a big kaboom or something." Cynwise pouted. "That was really disappointing."
.o'OoOoO'o.

"Albus Dumbledore!" The voice assaulted Dumbledore like a physical weapon it sounded so horrible. "You told us that Tom Riddle was contained and unable to affect our society. Now look at us!"

"I assure you Elenore, Tom will be removed from the picture as soon as possible."

"The most powerful wizard in the world Dumbledore, and you're telling me that you are not able to remove him from the picture right now?"

Dumbledore twinkled gently at the old crone and his fellow members of the Wizengamot. "As I have told you in the past, things are not as simple as that. Tom Riddle must be dealt with as the rules of the prophecy dictate. I cannot kill Riddle, the only boy that can is Harry Potter."

"Whom you seem to have misplaced." Archibald Lumberyard called.

"He will return to me as he always does." Hogwarts' headmaster told them confidently. "I have put in place plans, but for now we just need to wait."

He glanced around the room. He hated these fools. They needed to be put into their place far too often. "If that is in order, let us move to the next item on the agenda.

"Defence of the ministry, how are the trainee aurors progressing?"

"The accelerated learning program has been good for them."

"Excellent," Dumbledore called. "Have them double the dose of learning potion and triple their hours."

"They're already training sixteen hours a day!" Someone called.

"So?" Umbridge asked.

"We need those aurors Elder Pobbles. Voldemort has control of England and we need defences to ensure he doesn't get control of us as well before he can be taken out."

There was a murmur of assent and the motion was passed.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry jumped from one rock to the next, careful not to fall in. He was missing the tips of his left hand from touching the water, but it seemed to him that he needed to cross the river if he were to make it to the wall.

Every time he entered this dream, either Draco or Ron would kill them and they would wake up again. The spirits of the two sacrificed souls seemed to be in both their heads and with every dose of the potions, the heads became bigger and more opaque.

Thankfully, every time Harry reappeared in this world, seemed like he was still the same distance from the wall as he had been the previous visit, so he had theorised that his goal was to get to the wall in less than sixteen doses, but now it looked like he might even reach there in five.

Despite the fact that he and Hermione were both seeing the same vision, he had seen no sign of her, though they had both agreed to head towards the wall where they would etch a sign of which direction the other had followed and hopefully, one would catch up with the other before the sixteenth dose.

It was just a hunch, but that's what they felt they needed to achieve with these visions. They had to find each other.

With another jump, Harry landed on the other bank and started walking towards the wall. It towered in front of him. This was his third dose, and if he kept going at the same rate as he had been he might even reach the wall in this dose.

So he thought to himself happily before the telltale rustle of leaves told him that one of the vengeful spirits was around.

"Potter! I'm going to kill you once and for all this time!"
.o'OoOoO'o.

Voldemort sat on his throne. He was not a happy person, he had taken control of Britain but those stubborn fools at the Ministry of Magic still refused to acknowledge his authority over them.

He adjusted the crown on his head. It was a good fake, but he would settle for nothing less than the best, but that was why he had a rogue arithmancer named Jackal looking at the original crown and trying to discern how the enchantments on it were done.

He had plans that needed to be done and as Lucius left his presence, he felt better about certain projects that would soon come to bear fruit.

His attack on St Mungos would be fun to watch as they had just elected a new leader for the British military. The man was ruthless and borderline psychotic, but he was smart enough to hide his desires for carnage behind a mask that men could respect. It had been a pain for Lucius to hunt down such a man.

It would be interesting when the anti-muggle wards and charms fell and they would storm through the building killing everybody.

Tom Riddle hated muggles with a vengeance, but they were so plentiful that it seemed impossible to not use them expendably.

He would enjoy putting a thousand of them under the imperius and running them through the ministry of magic armed with those 'guns' which broke through protego shields quickly, and their rocket launchers seemed almost unforgivable too.

Still, when push came to shove, his nemesis Harry Potter, the one whose death would guide him to immortality, had taken out an entire military base and his strongest, most capable warrior witch.

It was clear that the Dark Lord needed to take care of the little upstart himself, but finding the Baron was proving to be more difficult than anybody else could handle, he had hidden himself and the legion of werewolves well.

And lastly, there was his research on immortality. He needed the power of a star-crossed. The mudblood named Hermione was the ideal choice as she seemed to be the most powerful of them all. This made the dark lord regret not taking her from Potter when he had the chance, but now he had to settle for second best. He hated settling for second best.

Voldemort had already found the key to immortality before he even overthrew the royalty of Britain, but he had found that his body, recreated from a ritual was incompatible with the spell, and thus, he needed a newborn child to overwrite with his own being with which to perform the spell on.

There were of course problems with that. Leaving his current body would make physical touch from Potter a problem once again, he needed a body which had Potter's blood flowing through it's veins which meant he had to sire the child himself but that in itself was impossible, but he wouldn't admit to his Death Eaters that he was impotent.

He had told them that it was below him to dirty himself with a half-blood and so his research on immortality close to complete, he turned to finding alternative means of creating this body he so desired.

Little did Voldemort know that when he had asked his best researchers to look into the problem, they had already guessed his little problem and it was a bit of a joke among them. It was a dangerous joke to keep because if the Dark Lord probed their minds and accidentally stumbled across it, they were in for a world of hurt.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Ron Weasley, or the spirit thereof floated aimlessly. He was hungry again, but that was no surprise; he was always hungry. It surprised him that no matter how many times he savaged the ones who killed him and brought him to this awful world he never felt sated.

There was nothing to do in this world and it felt like he'd been trapped in here for years and the only thing to bide his time was that moment when he would feel energised and grow in size. He was roughly half the size of the trees now, far taller than either Hermione or Harry. When he next had that feeling, he would know it was time to start his hunt again, and this time, he would bite his prey clear in two.

It was a surprise to him when he floated into a clearing and found the ethereal head of the other one. A face that he hated.

"Malfoy. I always had a feeling that you were here too."

"Weasley. I could smell you a mile away."

"I assume you're the one who has been killing the ones that I have missed." Ron asked him.

"Naturally, there's nobody else here, the only other living things here are trees."

"So what did you do to get on their bad side?"

Malfoy's first instinct was to give a snarky reply, but after all this time being lonely, even he wanted someone to talk to. "My father and I set a trap for them, but I grossly miscalculated. I hadn't counted on Granger going crazy and killing everybody in the room." He smirked. "What about you? What broke up the golden trio?"

"Dumbledore promised me Hermione, and she resisted,"

"That's right, I'd forgotten about Dumbledore and his pawns."

"Once perhaps, but not then. Dumbledore took me aside one day and told me that he needed someone else to help control the wizarding

world, thought it was a pretty good deal and he explained a few things to me and had me oblivate a few people around the school was an easy life and I got whatever I wanted as long as I didn't piss the old man off."

Ron and Draco talked for a length of time until they ran out of things they were willing to divulge, never once was there an apology between them for anything in the past however.

"Do you think we'll be able to leave here if we get powerful enough?" Ron asked.

"Boring as it is here, I kind of like being able to kill Potter and Granger over and over again." Draco drawled. "But it would be good to take this power back to our world if we could."

Ron nodded in appreciation, but he still wanted to leave.

Draco and Ron had taken to travelling the land together. It was a lot more interesting than wondering around aimlessly while waiting for their prey to arrive. It took a full two months for the spectres before either of them he felt the familiar surge through their bodies, that signalled the time for a new hunt. This time however, the surge was accompanied with a bout of pain which neither appreciated at the nape of their necks.

He and Draco both screamed as power ripped through them both, unable to keep themselves afloat, they each dropped to the ground and felt something oozing out the back of their heads. Ron also feeling like his mouth was becoming rather cramped, and as the pain receded, they both felt a reminiscent feeling of movement.

Ron stared in surprise as he got to his new feet and looked at Draco who had become a ferret with a human head. His vision seemed clearer than ever before and Draco pushed himself upwards with his paws and stared wide-eyed at Ron.

"Wha-" Ron sounded like he had a mouth full of pie when he spoke.

"You- You have a spider's body!"

"I HAB WHA!?" Ron spun around only to find that he was incapable of looking at his body.

"Wait a minute, what am I?" Draco asked as he stared at his paws. "Oh no... don't tell me. Anything but this! The indignity of it all!" He complained.

Ron slumped frustrated to the ground. "If this happened, we can assume that those two are here again. I'm going to make them pay for this!" He flashed poisonous fangs and scampered away towards the wall, Draco in tow.

Not so far away, Harry sighed happily. He'd made it. Reaching out and touching it, the wall was smooth. It had taken him 8 doses after all to reach the wall as Ron and Draco had been getting quicker and quicker at locating him.

He looked around and grabbed a rock that was lying beneath a tree and started carving into the wall. "Harry..." He smirked and continued, "loves Hermione" He sighed happily and looked around. He had to pick a direction to start walking and if he picked the wrong direction, he'd never meet up with Hermione. He didn't get to travel long though as he was soon confronted by the two ugliest monsters ever seen.

Harry wanted to laugh at Ron, but the menacing look on his face was enough to make him run away as fast as he could when a flash of white shot past the spider and the ferret with Malfoy's face mauled him once more.

He shot awake and spent a couple of seconds pushing himself upwards. He glanced at Hermione who was out of it a minute longer than he had been and theorised that he had been eaten first. He couldn't believe what he'd seen though; Ron, a spider, and Malfoy, a ferret. Surely that was anything but coincidence.

Hermione pushed herself upwards and yawned. "I'm starting to miss normal dreams." She said with a frown.

"I made it to the wall today." Harry told her with a smile.

His partner nodded back.

"Did you happen to notice which way those two came from?" Harry asked.

Hermione thought silently and made movements with her hand as if calculating direction and then nodded. "If you're facing the wall, then they came from my right."

"Good, then I'll head left on our next dose."

Hermione nodded. "Was there something different about Ron and Draco when you saw them?"

Harry talked about his encounter with them which Hermione confirmed. When they discussed the change with the other rouges, the only one with a decent suggestion was Osfrid.

"I'm assuming that the forest you're both walking in has something to do with you and if that's the case, perhaps the lack of animals in the forest is what made you both influence Draco and Ron into becoming animals you associate either of them with."

That made sense. Kind of.

"Why couldn't Ron be scared of a cat or something."

"Do you want to see a cat the size of a tiger with Ron's head on it? I don't think that would be much better." Hermione admonished. "For the first time in my life I feel afraid of ferrets." She said as she shivered. "I can't believe he broke me in half..."
.o'OoOoO'o.

With another dose out of the way, Harry and Hermione each parted ways for a while to see about getting their wedding clothes fitted.

The vampires seemed to be going all-out with the couple in making sure they were dressed like royalty when getting married. Harry had been gifted with a suit of armour that was as black as night and

charmed to be lightweight which Harry quite liked and decided that looking like a dementor was nice and intimidating, but a suit of armour would help protect him physically. At the very least he wouldn't have to worry about his sword going through his leg anymore.

Hermione on the other hand was gifted with a far less practical dress. She had originally protested at getting married in a pitch black dress and drew the line the second she saw them coming for her with dark gothic style makeup and so the vamps resigned to giving her blood-red lipstick instead. It was an incredibly old-style dress with a corset and hoop. The veil came with a silver crown that completely contrasted with the old style dress.

In between doses, the Barons Black utilized their time negotiating between the vampires and the werewolves what they wanted once Harry overthrew the two old farts currently running the place.

Harry would not allow the Vampires to hunt Humans, but agreed that criminals were fair game. If a lack of criminals became a problem, they would see about human sacrifices when that occurred.

It was at Harry's suggestion they decided to create the impression that being chosen to be either a werewolf or a vampire was a privilege, not a curse, but creating this impression would mean that the vampires would need to reign in their troublesome vampires.

He let them decide how they were going to go about it.

There was a problem with that system for the werewolves however as a werewolf did not naturally have control over their actions when transformed. It was very important therefore that wolfsbane be provided by the government for them as a normal living expense and that any turnings of either race be monitored for the sake of knowing how much money was being spent.

These talks moved the conversation out of Harry's comfort zone. It was McGonagall, Remus and Hermione that ensured they documented all decisions and while Harry listened in and often gave

some invaluable suggestions at the meetings, a lot of it seemed to go over his head.

He had a lot to learn, but the fact was that even in his current state, Harry would have run the country better than Voldemort currently was.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Hermione continued moving forwards with her left hand running against the wall. There was no getting tired in this world. It was painful dying, but only until they woke up and then it didn't seem like they ached or anything. It was just like waking from a dream.

She sighed and wished she could hear birds chirping or something to displace the monotony of it all and while a miracle didn't happen to make birds appear, the monotony removed itself from her presence when she noticed the scenery change slightly. Trees were ruined and growing unusually, many had glowing chunks taken out of them and the floor glowed almost radioactively.

Hermione pressed on and a moment later, she saw in the wall a large hole, taller than she was and only just within her reach.

It shimmered as she stared at it and Hermione tried to touch whatever it was, only to realise that there was something invisible blocking it. Whatever it was it was something soft.

The phenomenon reminded her of something, but she wasn't sure what.

She theorised that the unusual transformation in the vegetation around the glow was due to a leakage at some point from the hole.

After looking around the area for a length of time, she decided to speak to Harry about it when she saw him next which to her eternal relief actually happened that very same dose.

She looked up in surprise to see an ethereal man walking towards her with a large grin on his face. "Hermione!" His hollow voice echoed as he ran towards her.

"You found the other one!" He cried happily. "I saw one just like this about a kilometre behind me."

When he moved closer to her he looked rather shocked. "Hermione, you're see-through."

"I'm not see-through," She retorted. "You're the one who's see-through!"

They each looked at their limbs, each convinced that they were completely opaque and yet even when they tried to embrace, they stepped right through each other.

Harry could feel her arms in his lung and it made it hard to breathe. They both very quickly stepped away from each other.

It was a puzzling moment for them both which made them worry a touch if they'd be able to truly appreciate each other's company, but as Harry mused, perhaps it was for the better, Hermione's naked body made his body do things which normally he would have liked to have hidden from her.

She just looked at him in amusement making him even more embarrassed, so he diverted her attention as quickly as he was able back to the holes in the wall.

"You know what it is, don't you?" Harry asked her with a grin.

"It seems familiar," She replied, not taking her eyes off him. "I've seen this kind of damage before."

"I'm sure that these holes are fountains of magic." He suggested. "The force holding them closed is us."

Hermione's head snapped up to look at his face, then back at the wall in wonder.

"I appeared right near one and I've been thinking about it all this time. It looks just like the shrieking shack doesn't it?" He asked.

"So, this forest, this is our mind?"

"It would make sense wouldn't it? Draco and Ron are here because we're each drinking a potion that contains them both. They get stronger with every dose."

"So have you found anybody else's taps?"

Harry shook his head in response. He hadn't seen anything on the wall except the two holes.

They spent their time puzzling out the mystery until the inevitable time of Draco's appearance to kill them off. It didn't matter though; they were together at last in their mind-world. So they both accepted death graciously.

.o'OoOoO'o.

"England is completely cut off from official information. Companies relying on government subsidiary are falling; even the phone and electric companies there are finding it difficult to provide uninterrupted service!"

"Three countries not part of the United Nations have taken it upon themselves to send special force teams to attempt to remove the threat from England."

A murmur ran through the United Nations.

The removal of the Queen and subsequent economic failure of the country had hit the world hard. England may not have been the richest country in the world, but it was a critical player in the events of the world and businesses worldwide relying on imports and exports from Britain found themselves in the deep end looking for alternatives which were either more expensive or simply not available anywhere else.

Rumours of members of the new members of government there said that they killed subjects for fun and did little to actually run the country other than to command the military into fighting with factions unknown within the country.

Reports had shown that many people were trying to ignore the change in government as best they could but with harbours being systematically destroyed and airports being forcefully shut down it was inevitable that the subjects of Britain were in for a difficult time.

Countries such as Australia and Canada which while autonomous were technically both under the control of Britain sought to cut the link politically and become independent in their own right while still offering support to return the country to a more realistic government than the current one.

The task of the UN however was to create an endorsed special strike team with the best the member countries had to offer to take into custody, or if that was not possible, take out, the one called Voldemort.

"All of these assassination attempts have failed."

People talked of the members of the new government waving sticks around and doing things that could not be explained using conventional science. Certain members of the UN knew exactly who and what Voldemort was, but each country had their own relations with their magical community and they were not talked about in the UN.

The people who knew about Voldemort only pushed harder for his removal.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry stepped to the front of the hall. It would soon be filled with vampires and werewolves alike to witness Harry's wedding to Hermione. In a few hours they would take their last dose of potion and Harry would have a different kind of responsibility to look after.

Since they had met up at the wall, Harry and Hermione noticed each other becoming more opaque and it was nearing impossible for either of them to pass through each other, though they were not yet solid enough to interact fully with each other.

They had taken a stand against the two spirits, having decided that they were an obstacle to overcome. Perhaps it was a dangerous assumption to make as nobody knew what would happen after the last dose but they were getting sick of being preyed upon and used branches to make some wooden weapons which didn't help much.

The previous visit they had managed to influence their bodies in the real world to relax the pressure they held on the magic allowing a puddle of raw magic to flow onto the floor. Their makeshift weapons had been covered in the raw magic and turned to solid gold which was a surprise and in their last battle, Ron had lost three legs and one of his fangs while Draco had numerous cuts but Hermione was anything but skilled with weapons as she'd always told Harry they were rather pointless. Now she regretted it.

But after today, they would see about the final challenge.

"Is everything properly prepared?" Harry asked the priest member Linn.

"Everything will go perfectly I'm sure." He replied.

Humanoids started moving towards forwards and they all stood in aisles. There were no seats present in the hall and Harry suspected those standing up the back were simply there so that they could say they'd been there.

The young man shifted on his feet nervously, his armour rattling as he moved. He watched as movement slowed and Remus hurried up to him, Minerva, Luna and Cynwise in tow; each looking extravagant in their far more vibrant clothes, even if they were all grey. Probably the most interesting thing Harry noted was that Cynwise was wearing a bonnet that swayed unnaturally on her head.

"You got the rings?" Harry asked Remus.

"Of course."

At first glance, it seemed like a perfectly muggle traditional wedding. The first difference to notice apart from the dress of everyone present

was that there was no organ music and Hermione, together with Knight as acting father of the bride strode down the aisle.

The bride jingled with step as bells attached to her dress rang in an unusual melody, each step toward the dais seemed to make the sound grow in volume.

Despite the morbid appearance of the black gown she was wearing, Harry's breath was taken away from him. His own suit which had a regal feel to it seemed to be eclipsed by the magnificent beauty of the dress which radiated a command of respect for anybody that stepped past.

As she took placed her foot on the first step the Dark Lord Harry swore he could hear a choir singing which built up into a magnificent full sound until she placed her first foot on the platform level with Harry and the sound just died out. The bells on her dress made no further noise after that.

Harry smiled at her and wondered if she could even see out of the pitch black veil.

"Mistress." The elder greeted.

Hermione inclined her head without saying a word as the tradition they were following dictated.

"Dark Lord Potter, you may start your declaration of intention."

Harry nodded and aligned himself toward Hermione. "My lady, you and I have been side by side for what feels like forever. More recently we were thrown together as comrades in an invisible war and through that companionship I have found your love and my purpose in life.

"If you will enter an unbreakable bond of marriage with me, I will promise to look after you as only I am able. Your companionship with me shall lead to the downfall of two dark lords who bring anguish to not only you or I, but every living creature directly or indirectly.

"I will expect that if you accept my hand in marriage that you will be my council and my conscious, that you will guide my hand to be a merciful ruler to my followers.

"You will understand that the oath I am about to offer you will tie my soul to yours and that your death will drag my soul with you to the other side. My life will be in your hands as much as my own."

He let out a breath. As he had spoken the words he started to realise the gravity of his words.

"You will understand that as I ascend to a throne that I will build with my own two hands that a ruler must have heirs. It will be your duty to provide for the people and for me. You will raise our children with a fair but stern hand.

"These are my terms of marriage." Harry ended.

"If you accept his terms," Their Master of Ceremony stated quietly. "Step forward."

Hermione stepped closer to Harry.

The priest nodded to Harry. "Then bind your promise to the ring."

Harry gestured to Remus who handed him the one destined for Hermione. Despite the meaning of the wedding, Harry couldn't help but hypothetically wonder what would happen if he accidentally enchanted the wrong ring. He shook those thoughts from his head and double-checked he had the correct ring.

"Redimio meus spondeo." Harry called reverently. The ring glowed gently in his hand as the elder gestured to Hermione.

"Dark Lady Granger, You may now start your declaration of intention."

Hermione shuddered at being called 'Dark Lady Granger'. The formal introductions seemed to be an impromptu addition to the lines specified by the elder.

"My Lord, It has always been us, ever since you sent me that letter with the words 'I remember everything'. You have fought beside me even when the odds were against us and every time we have come out alive. Tonight I will formally ask you to continue to do so.

"If you would enter in that unbreakable bond of marriage with me, you will continue to work through the same goals as I. Your fight against Voldemort will be conducted with me by your side, even if I cannot deal the finishing blow. Our fight with Dumbledore is for us to overcome together.

"Know that I shall be there to help you pick up the pieces when we have won. I do not doubt that we will. You and I together shall rebuild our country from its ruins.

"You shall accept my guidance as your queen and work towards a fair world where all creatures, so called 'dark' or 'light' can live in equality.

"Understand that I bind my life to yours and that your death will mean my own.

"You will comprehend that as we ascend to a throne that rulers must have heirs. It will be your duty to provide for the people and for I. You will teach our children what it means to be loved as I love you."

Hermione had a lump form in her throat.

"These are my terms of marriage."

"If you accept her terms, Step forward."

Harry moved close enough to Hermione they were an arm's length apart.

"Then bind your promise to the ring."

Remus placed the ring in Hermione's hand, and like Harry, chanted the spell "Redimio meus spondeo" to imbue Harry's ring with her

'terms' as she was forced to call them. She hated the idiom, but understood why they were doing it this way.

"Upon placing these rings on your fingers, you are entering into a permanent commitment, not even removing your own finger will break the promises, are you perfectly clear on that?"

"We are." They both acknowledged.

"Then hold the rings in your right hands, and place your ring finger through your other's promise ring."

They each did as instructed, each pushing their respective promise bands onto their fingers where they resized to fit rightly on their fingers enough so that they were too small to take off, but wouldn't cut off circulation to that finger.

"With this act, you may lift her veil and gaze into the face of your wife." Harry did as he was told and when he did so he found Hermione's eyes shimmering tears though her face was set in stone. She was trying to remain strong but right now, she wanted nothing more than to cry tears of happiness.

Harry leaned down slightly and kissed her gently and passionately.

Even after the clapping had died down, the rings continued to glow.

Harry pulled back from her face where she continued to face upwards with her eyes closed as if savouring the feeling. He put his arm around her and turned to face the crowd.

"I have made promises to your leaders. Let it be known that these promises will be kept. When my heir is old enough, their father will wipe the floor with those who would oppress the residents of this country! It belongs to all of us!" Harry called as he urged Hermione forward and together, they walked down the steps, through the door and apparated home.

"Missus Potter." Harry said with a grin.

"If that's who you want me to be, I could get attached to Dark Lady Potter."

Harry grimaced. "Dark Lord Potter made me feel like I should have been trying to kill them all..."

"It's a matter of perspective really. If all it takes to be a dark lord is that you're male, a wizard, have knowledge of Dark magic and have a few followers, then yes Harry, you're a dark lord." She cupped his face and smiled. "But the title means nothing to me. It's Harry that I love my darling."

Harry kissed her tenderly.

A few telltale pops and poofs indicated that their roommates had appeared. "Are you guys going to be alright looking after this place?"

"For all we know Harry, it might be over as soon as it starts."

"If it's going to be anything like when we broke our taps of then it might take days or weeks." Hermione replied on his behalf.

"Love the look Osfrid." Harry said to Cynwise' bonnet.

"Oh har har." The hat groused as it glared daggers at Minerva. "Any of you magic folk may feel free to put me back to normal whenever you're ready."

Harry flicked his fingers at the Hat and grinned as he swept Hermione off of her feet and marched her towards the bedroom.

"Thank you." The hat replied.

Minerva who had felt rather rebellious when she had turned him into the bonnet let out a rather uncharacteristic giggle.

"What? Oh no... he didn't..." The hat whined.

Cynwise' took what used to be a bonnet off her head and stared at the baseball cap. "I went to Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry and all I got was this stupid hat." She read aloud.

"POTTER! THAT'S NOT FUNNY!" The hat screamed.

Harry enjoyed listening to the hat screaming. He felt like the hat was finally getting its comeuppance for its own manipulations.

He placed Hermione down on their bed and couldn't seem to wipe his grin off his face. She rolled towards him smiling.

"Like what you see Mister Potter?"

"Hey, I'm a married man." He said mischievously.

"I know you are. I've got a glowing finger to prove it."

Harry lay down on the bed beside her. "Should we perhaps put up a silencing charm?"

"I thought you'd never ask." Hermione replied. "Though would you be willing to wait a couple of hours perhaps?"

Harry looked up in surprise and feeling a little hurt, or perhaps frustrated. "Why?"

Hermione had a roguish grin of her own. "I was thinking... how would you feel about making love to me in our mind-world?"

Harry blinked. "I suppose I've waited this long." He jutted his lower lip.

"I'll make it worth your while." She told him seductively. "Besides, a silencing charm won't stop them from looking in. At least they wouldn't be able to see us there."

"But Ron and Draco could." Harry argued to which Hermione frowned.

"Don't kill the mood darling."

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry and Hermione basked in the normality of married life until Minerva kindly reminded them it was time for their last dose.

They gave her their thanks and moved to the training room where the potion was still sitting.

Harry wasn't able to understand why they needed to make a potion that would have served another two courses but some potions were like that.

"If we're asleep for more than twenty minutes, you should banish what's here." Hermione told them.

"Are you sure that's wise?" Remus asked.

"Sixteen doses. That's what the potion called for. Presumably something will happen. You should all be careful as some nasty things happened when Harry and I messed with our magical limits."

"What happened?" McGonagall asked them. "So we know what to look out for."

"Well, the shrieking shack looked very different than when we walked into the place. The walls changed material and I turned the carpet to a soft stone." Hermione reminisced. "There were a lot of holes in the wall, but I'm sure that was the tap breaking. That shouldn't happen this time, but if you see signs of magic leaking from us, we want you to get as far away as possible."

Remus' mouth dropped as a few things fell into place.

"It was you!" Remus yelled. "You were the ones who made me think that the shack was in the Thames with the entrance being in Madam Maxine's office!"

Harry lifted an eyebrow. "You can regale me of stories about rerouting the Channel Tunnel into Madam Maxine's office later. Right now, we have a potion to take."

The potion they took this time was three times larger than the previous doses. Harry was rather concerned he'd fall asleep after getting through only one dose worth, but thankfully he lasted through the whole thing.

Hermione was a touch slower at finishing hers, and they crumpled simultaneously. It was Luna, who suggested they take them to their bedroom.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry called out to Hermione and her voice wafted back across the trees. He sighed with relief.

Since they'd found the holes in the wall, they had managed to figure out that the world they were currently in was actually two worlds overlapping each other, and for every dose they had taken, the two holes in the wall moved closer together.

Today, both of the holes sat only a metre apart from each other.

Things felt very different in the forest today however. It felt as if time was on a completely different scale.

Harry picked up the golden sword that lay near the hole from their last battle and Hermione approached him, this time looking completely opaque.

Harry thought she looked kind of like a wood nymph, the way she skipped out from between the trees and immediately embraced him in her arms and kissed him as if she had found a long lost lover.

He was acutely aware of Hermione's breasts squeezed against him and he started to feel a little stiff.

"I've wanted you for so long Harry." She whispered to his ear.

"Me too my darling wife." He replied making her shudder as he kissed her ear and started nipping kisses along her neck while running a hand along her stomach and waist. "I can't believe I waited as long as I have."

Hermione moaned gently and didn't argue as he pushed her backwards onto the moss.

She kissed him back as she wrapped her hands around his manhood and moved back and forth a little; eliciting a guttural noise from Harry.

Harry shifted out of her reach and placed his fingers at her entrance as if testing the water. She moaned more and moved her body as he played with her as they had a few nights beforehand.

He enjoyed listening to her and feeling her move next to him.

Leaning down, he took her breast in his mouth and gently sucked on it.

"That feels wonderful Harry..." She cooed in response. "I want you inside of me my love."

Harry let go of her breast and shifted on top of her where she struggled to position him. Harry had a couple of problems with getting the angle correct, but after a moment was able to slide into her making her squeak with pleasure.

They each awkwardly moved to their own rhythms while kissing each other. Hermione was running her hands across his back and in an instant when Harry did something that caused her a moment of bliss, reached for his buttocks and took control of his movement.

Harry himself had never felt anything quite as exquisite as the pleasure racking his body, but for him the real pleasure was in seeing how his wife responded to him. All he knew was that he didn't want it to end, but it was not to be.

As he and his lover found a rhythm and found a spot that felt nice, they moved faster, and the pleasure mounted until Harry couldn't take it anymore. At that moment, he screamed her name and felt something flow through him and into her before he collapsed on her.

For her however it was just the beginning. Feeling Harry's essence inside of her started a chemical reaction of pleasure for her the likes of which she'd never felt before. As she continued to move against him, she felt Harry's stick soften as he could no longer keep it erect, but this in turn gave her a different kind of pleasure as he contracted disjointedly.

She continued to move against him until he had shrunk so much it slipped out of her.

It was a minor disappointment to her that she never got to feel the heaven that they talked about in her mother's romance novels, but as she learned that time, her husband may seem like superman, but learning to make love effectively would be something they would spend a lot of time learning and experimenting together.

Her turn would come, but it had still felt amazing nevertheless.

Harry had never felt so tired but he became aware that Hermione's breathing had become laboured and pushed himself tiredly off of her, allowing her to breathe easily without the weight of him on top of her lungs.

"I love you Hermione," He told her tiredly. "That was wonderful."

"I love you too." She replied happily as she pushed herself under his arm and snuggled up to him where they both fell asleep.
.o'OoOoO'o.

The rogues all stood around the potion blushing. A few moments ago Remus had put a silencing charm on their room and they all promised they would not look, so it was that they decided they needed to do something about the wall opposite the hallway leading to their bedroom as the rock seemed rather bland now that they were noticing it more often.

Osfrid had announced that though the two newlyweds were doing 'that' there was no intelligence to be found in their minds. They were still in the dream world.

Cynwise turned the hat inside out for being a voyeur.

"What is this!? Pick on the hat day!?" Osfrid decided that being defenceless was not a good thing against a vampire whom he could not influence at all.

"Well, they've been out of it a while, we should get rid of this potion." Knight said.

"Right." Remus agreed and with a wave of his wand and a spoken "Evanescio!" They were left with a spotless golden cauldron.

With two eggs in the bottom of it.

Six heads and a hat peered into the cauldron in curiosity.

"Are they supposed to be there?" McGongall asked them.

"No." Remus replied.

"What are they?" Luna asked. "Are these perhaps the eggs of a brain-infesting-thugger?"

"I doubt it..." Cynwise replied. "Those are green."

They pondered for a moment until Knight declared that Remus should do some research, working backwards.

Remus protested that he didn't know enough about potions to figure out what went wrong. Hermione would, but she was in a coma.

The fact was though that someone had made a grave mistake and Remus spent seven days trying to figure out what had gone wrong.

During that time, Minerva did her reading, Cynwise and Luna were going over vampire ethics over a tea party. Luna's chair was far too small and the teddy bears looked at the adults as they walked past as if to say "Please! Take us away from this torture!" But they were incapable of speech, so their plight went unnoticed.

Knight, Fenrir and Wormtail were making Voldemort's life hard by sabotaging his efforts with the help of Pettigrew's secret stash of Polyjuice. Getting Lucius Malfoy's hair was easy as he was losing it steadily enough. After that it was a simple matter of approaching the Military general and ordering him to attack a known gathering point for Death Eaters warning him that the opposition were trying to infiltrate them.

Last they heard, Lucius was licking his wounds for being senile.

Peter had gotten wind of Voldemort's need to create an immaculate conception spell. Telling this to the rogues caused riotous laughter amongst them where they decided to start posting notices around London and Diagon Alley asking people if they should be following a king who couldn't get it up.

While the werewolves didn't exactly like Peter much and made that very clear, knight made a concerted effort to make sure that he was given opportunities to redeem himself in their eyes and Peter seemed to be milking these opportunities for all they were worth.

Finally, when Remus caught them all together and asked who had added the phoenix ash, Cynwise ducked under the table.

"Did you think to perhaps remove the phoenix from the ashes?" He asked her icily.

"It bit me!" She protested. "So I drowned it!"

"You drowned Fawkes in the potion?" Minerva asked horrified. "You can't just drown an animal because it bit you young lady!"

"Don't call me young! I'm older than you are!"

Minerva refused to rise to the bait.

"Have you been able to figure out what effect this would have on them Remus?"

Remus shook his head. "There are too many variables. Phoenixes are typically very magic resistant so I'm hoping the impact would be negligible, but it's just too hard to tell as there isn't much known about them and I've found nothing to suggest anybody has ever managed to get one in a potion where it didn't escape from."

"So what are these things in the cauldron then?"

"My best guess is that those are phoenix eggs."

The hypothesis was met with surprise, who had ever heard of a phoenix egg.

"All we can really do is wait and see if Harry and Hermione ever wake up." Knight said.

"Has anybody checked to make sure they're even still alive?" Fenrir asked.

Knight coughed. "Um, yes. They're definitely still alive, or at least, the bodies are."
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry and Hermione spent a lot of time exploring each other, but there was still an uneasiness that accompanied the fact that the mind world around them had changed, and was still changing.

They experienced their first night-time in the place, which was odd given there was no sun in the place in the first instance. There was a breeze and the place just suddenly seemed so much more alive than before.

Despite the changes to the world around them, they still never seemed to feel hungry, though there were moments that Harry really wanted to get some taste in his mouth like pumpkin juice or something.

The uneasiness however came from the general lack of Ron and Draco. It never took those two very long to find them the previous times. It was as though they had just waited for them the last time.

Harry had attempted to teach Hermione how to use a sword, but she just didn't seem to have an aptitude for it. The problem was that Hermione didn't have strong enough arms to pick up a weapon made of solid gold.

After deciding that it was a waste of time even trying, they instead tried messing with the flow of magic from the holes though that turned out to be beyond them also. They knew from previous experience that while they were in this world, the magic was literally corrosive to them.

So without being able to shape the magic, it was just a pool of uncontrolled and unpredictable magic. Completely useless to them.

Twelve nights passed in the dream world when the two of them were awoken by a rumbling.

"What is that?" Hermione asked with a worried look etched on her face.

"Don't know... sounds like giants..." Harry replied getting to his feet and reaching for his sword.

"Here?"

Harry rubbed the sleep from his eyes and climbed a tree. "Holy shit!" He cried. "It's giants alright! Ron and Draco are headed this way!"

"You've got to hide!" He cried to her as he dropped to the ground.

"I will do no such thing!" She replied hotly.

"Listen to me Hermione, you can't fight this without magic." He pleaded. "I just have this feeling... We can't die this time."

"I know, I feel scared to die this time too. But I can't let you fight them alone!"

"HERE YOU ARE!" Ron's voice boomed as a Spider as large as a tree battered through the forest.

"We've been waiting for you!" Draco said, crashing through himself to stand beside him. "We're going to kill you once and for all, then we should be able to escape this place."

"Hermione, stay back." Harry pleaded as he pushed her towards the wall while keeping his sword trained on them both.

"You're still using that thing?" Ron asked. "Sticks and Stones may break my bones-"

"-But my sword will not fail me!" Harry cried as he charged towards Ron and swung at his face and rolling out of the way to avoid the pincers.

Draco reached down to pick Hermione up, but she dodged out of the way. Being a giant now his movements were a lot slower which made things easier for Hermione to dodge.

Harry reached upwards with his sword and poked it through Ron's thorax and started running with it, causing blood to spill on top of him, but as he turned back to make sure that Ron was dead, he could see the wound closing up and though Ron roared in pain, he soon stopped and turned to face Harry who, for a brief second had doubt in his mind as to whether or not he could win.

Ron charged towards him and Harry swung his sword, cleanly cutting off one of Ron's pincers and ducking under the other one. He reached to his left with the sword and amputated one of Ron's legs again. Unlike the wound his body had sustained, his leg did not grow back.

Harry grinned. He was going to take out as many legs as he needed to stop him from moving around.

"Come here Little Bitch!" Draco called as he reached once more for her.

Hermione ducked out of the way and was swatted rather forcefully with Draco's tail. Where she was knocked to the floor, stunned long enough for Draco to pick her up and start squeezing her.

She screamed in pain causing Harry to look up at where she was.

He immediately stopped battling Ron and ran to her aid where Draco was grinning manically as he squeezed.

He wasn't grinning anymore when Harry sliced up his Achilles tendon causing him to lose balance and his grip on Hermione.

When Ron careened into him, chasing after Harry, Draco flew to the ground, letting go of Hermione who rolled to the ground and though in pain, pushed herself off the ground as quickly as she could. Draco had narrowly missed Harry who had dodged and cut off another of Ron's legs who was down to five and was finding it rather difficult to move effectively.

With a swish, Harry removed the fourth leg and Ron went face first into the ground, where he was dragging himself in circles.

With his right ankle no longer usable, Draco resorted to crawling on his three legs, but having a body that was designed for such movement made sure that having only three legs was only a minor handicap.

He turned further on Hermione and bared his ferret-like teeth at her.

Hermione backed against the wall and prayed to herself, "Please! Work magic!" She aimed both hands outwards and screamed "Reducto!"

Nothing happened, but Draco stopped and stared at her.

Hermione watched him for a moment and wondered what had happened, when she chanced to look down and noticed that her stomach had a light nimbus around it.

A bolt of lightning shot from Hermione's body, through the ferret causing it to shake uncontrollably and hit Harry who sidestepped Ron who was charging at him and sliced off his other fang.

Harry stared at the bolt that didn't hurt, he couldn't feel it at all, but he could see between him and Hermione that a glow had developed around both of them, and a moment after that, the ground started shaking much worse than before.

All four of them stopped fighting and struggled to stay afoot as the lightning bolt between Harry and Hermione suddenly shot out from the middle of them and shot into the wall above them causing debris to fall around them.

Harry got to his feet and ran to Ron, stumbling as he ran and shoved his sword through Ron's neck and lifted upwards, almost severing his head from his body which was held there by little more than skin and muscle.

Harry stepped back and watched Ron gargle blood before approaching once more and thrusting his sword through his temple.

Ron's eight eyes rolled back into their sockets and his legs curled inwards.

At the same Time, Draco bared his fangs at Hermione and dashed towards her faster than she had thought him possible.

Harry stared open eyed as Draco jumped towards her and noticing a shimmer towards where he was jumping, closed his eyes and demanded with all his might that he let go of the plug that held the magic within the wall.

It answered his call and a full flood of magic shot out of the wall and blasted a hole through Draco's lower jaw and body.

Harry ran to Hermione, struggling to stay upright as the land continued to rumble. Draco's body landed long before he got there and it bubbled as the magical liquid caused it to change composition

and made his lungs grow arms and heads. It stopped twitching a few moments later as it slowly turned to stone.

Harry pulled Hermione into his arms.

"Are you alright?"

"I- I'm alright." She said, placing her hands on her abdomen. "The... The baby and I are fine."

"I'm so glad." He said pulling her close. "The baby?" He asked.

Hermione went wide eyed as she stared behind her. "Harry!"

Draco's head had detached itself from what was left of the body and floated directly at them. Harry shoved Hermione away from him roughly, gripped his sword and swung around three hundred and sixty degrees, cleaving Draco's head clean in half horizontally.

Harry panted and collapsed to the ground.

"Harry!"

A large crack formed in the ground between him and his wife that ran all the way up the wall and as quickly as it appeared, the earth split open between them and pulled them both apart.

The two souls that were holding Harry's vision of this world to Hermione's vision were dead and the link that bound it all together snapped like a rubber band holding up a ton weight, and along with it, the wall broke in twain, spilling forth magic with no control.

Harry reached for Hermione but she was already out of his reach. "HERMIONE!" He screamed at her as she called his name back to him.

Then they couldn't even see each other for the flood of magic that spewed from the wall down the crevice between them and without further notice, the wall started to crack the entire length of it and

Harry stared in morbid amazement as the wall exploded towards him, overflowing with magic like an avalanche.

He threw his arms up and to his amazement, a shield enveloped him and protected him from the raw magic that crashed down upon him and threw him about like a raging storm.

His shield bubble floated to the top of the magic and burst through the surface bouncing into the air.

Harry fell to his knees as he looked around. The forest was gone. All he could see around him was the shimmer of magic in all directions. He looked around for Hermione and called her name out into the void.

There was no response.

He screamed her name over and over again until he completely lost his voice from trying, upon which he fell to his knees and sobbed.

He never heard the flutter of wings or the scrape of talons as a bird landed atop his bubble.

"You caused this." A deep baritone rang through his mind. "Why?"

Harry's head shot upwards and looked at the pitch black bird that seemed to absorb all light.

Harry opened his mouth to say, "I wanted to protect the one I love," and though no voice escaped his throat, the bird still nodded in understanding.

"It would seem you have been granted that power." The bird said almost sadly. "The magic here feels unnatural in itself as if it were being generated artificially. What have you done?"

It never occurred to Harry not to tell the truth in front of this bird. "I don't know the details, but this is indirectly the result of my love for Hermione."

"That might explain the artificial feeling of it. I do not know how it is you are managing to convert love into magic."

Harry nodded as he looked around the desolate seas of magic. "Do you know if she is alright?"

"The other half of me is with her at the moment. She weeps for you as well and fears that you did not survive and that she will have to raise your child without you."

'That's right...' Harry thought to himself. 'She knew that she was pregnant. I almost forgot.'

"I don't want to leave her. I want to raise that child too."

"Then you should leave this barren place and return to where you came from."

"I don't know how." Harry replied.

"I shall take you then." The bird dug its claws into the bubble and took flight, effortlessly carrying the bubble up into the skies. It flew higher and higher until Harry became light-headed and passed out.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Remus, Knight, Cynwise, Luna and McGonagall all sat around the table feeling rather sorry for themselves.

Harry and Hermione had been in their bed for days on end. The only sign that they were still alive was when they would climb on top of each other which they hadn't done in two whole days. Other than that, they seemed completely dead to the world.

It left them everyone thinking that their minds had been destroyed and they only lived instinctually.

Dobby had been feeding them whenever he could, though it usually consisted of liquids as they wouldn't move their mouths to eat properly. It worried the elf ever so much.

A rumble sounded through the mountain and dust landed atop of their heads. All lights in the main cave cut out.

Screams could be heard from outside where all the werewolves on the mountain were running out of their homes.

"Lumos!" McGonagall called, but her wand refused to light. "Oh dear... my magic isn't working... Is it Death Eaters?"

"Let's head outside." Remus said urgently.

"I can't! It's daytime!" Luna protested.

"Then you should head somewhere, anywhere but in here!"

"Remus, grab Harry. I'll get Hermione." Knight said simply as they both groped their way to the bedroom.

"Let's go girls." Minerva said to their vampires.

She tried to apparate away, tunnelling herself outside, only to be struck rather painfully by a barrier and landing back right where she started. She yelped in surprise and wiped a bit of sweat from her head. If her reaction had been any worse, she would have been splinched.

Cynwise and Luna looked at each other; they had much better eyes in the dark than the transfiguration teacher had. Cynwise attempted to move to their vampire home in Romania, but found that she couldn't gather enough smoke to achieve it.

"We can't leave that way!" She said desperately.

"I'm going to get the emergency portkey I keep." Minerva said. "Get Osfrid."

McGonagall turned into a cat to allow her better sight in the dark and skittered to her dorm where she kept it.

If he weren't panicked, Knight would have blushed as he reached for Hermione, but thoughts of her being naked never occurred to his mind as the cave's rumbling increased and suddenly the room lit up as a flood of liquid magic exploded from their bodies, flooding the entire cave.

As the liquid touched anything not sentient, it would glow and started changing in nature.

In just a couple of seconds, everybody in the cave was up to their knees in magic.

Knight tried to reach Hermione, but the flow of magic coming from his body was far too strong for him to go against, and as the magic ran further up his body, he felt something manipulating his thoughts, making him relive the moments that his wife and daughter were killed, and then, something within himself changed.

Minerva hated water. It was a phobia that came with her animagus form and she fought the feeling every time she had a shower, but it was always worse when she was a cat, and she had returned to her human form the instant she saw the magic.

She had reached for her portkey and in her panic, she tried activating it, only to have it explode in her hand, tearing her hand from her arm.

She screamed in pain, but as the pain went over her arm, the pain miraculously stopped and she too felt something probing her thoughts, triggering her own fear of dying.

It was a feeling that everybody got and they stood in wonder, trying to figure out what had changed, not even aware that in that instance of wonder, the magic was up to their necks.

All it had taken was less than a minute and the volume of magic pouring out of the Barons Black was so much that it exploded out of the air vents they had installed, forming a shimmering fountain in the sky. As soon as it touched the fidelius ward that enveloped the entire mountain, something happened. In the blink of an eye, it was nighttime. The trees glowed and the mountain became covered in moss.

The werewolves stood out on the mountain, looking all around them. They had no idea what was happening around them. Those that knew where the blame lie were looking at the rock blocking the entrance to the Baron's cave which glowed brightly.

Peter Pettigrew too stared in wonder of the sight before him. Even in his years of servitude to the Dark Lord, he had never seen anything quite like it. Part of him wanted to morph into a rat and flee from this place, but even he could feel that something significant had happened this night and he wondered if this was how James' son planned on taking down Voldemort and Dumbledore.

If the display was anything to go by, perhaps he might even have a chance after all...
.o'OoOoO'o.

"Excuse me?" The Russian communicator asked. "Mir, repeat."

"I told you! I saw it for myself, a whole mountain went missing. It looks like there is nothing left but a crater. There was a black sphere and then, nothing!"

The commander in charge at that point had wondered over and started listening. "Get me a photo."

When the image finally arrived, they stared in amazement. "Surely the Norse are not developing weapons like that..."

"Do you think it could have been that new king person in England?"

The commander frowned and took wide strides to his office. "I must speak to the Defence Department. Immediately." He told himself.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Inside the cave, everybody was panicking that they were going to drown, flailing their arms in the magic.

Two eggs floated around the entrance where Hermione's finger collection had once been stored. A crack scored across the white egg, followed a moment later by a crack in the black egg.

Hermione's eyes fluttered open first.

She yawned, not even noticing that there was no air to breathe until she looked around and noticed Remus and Knight were floating in the air.

The two eggs exploded, sending glowing shards of egg flying through the liquid to embed itself in the grass walls. Where the eggs had once floated intact were two fledgling birds, one pure white, and one pure black.

Harry opened his eyes feeling more awake than he had ever been in his life and shot up straight, and after that point, the cave was bedlam with confusion.

Without really thinking, Harry called the magic to him and all of the fluid surrounding everyone flowed back into his body. Thumps could be heard as the bodies fell to something more solid.

The artificial lighting in the cave returned to normal.

Hermione looked to Harry, relief filling her eyes. "Harry! Thank Merlin you're alright! When the flood came I thought I'd lost you!"

"No, a bird helped me out." He replied, looking into her eyes. "I'm glad you're alright too."

He reached for what used to be his robes that were once laid out nicely on what used to be Hermione's bed, but had since been floating around in magic. As he picked them up and realised that they were no longer made of fabric but instead a metal which flowed like cotton. Seeing the change in his clothing, he looked around and noticed that all the walls had changed, the bed, their wardrobe even their clothes were nothing like they had been in the past.

"Is that Remus and Knight?" Hermione asked staring at the ceiling, which admittedly wasn't very high, but if the walls had been the same they might not have noticed the two grown men splayed haphazardly across the roof.

Harry pulled the material over his sleeves. "I wonder how they got there..."

He became aware of a bit of a racket coming from outside of their room and moved to the corridor linking their bedroom to the rest of the cave. "Do you want to see about getting them down?" Harry asked as he moved to find out what was causing the commotion.

In the front area, he found the two birds in the front of the cave. Harry couldn't help but think that the black bird seemed rather familiar. "Poor thing." He mumbled to himself as he picked them both up and went to show Hermione who he had heard was calling out just about every spell she knew to detach them from the ceiling to no avail.

"No go?" He asked.

"I don't know what's going on with them..."

"Hold these." Harry handed the two birds to Hermione who looked rather startled at them. He stepped onto their bed and grabbed Remus' leg and tugged. It wasn't stuck, and when he let go, the leg thudded back to the roof.

"Looks like the gravity has inverted or something..." He mumbled.

"Well, they should be alright if we leave them." Hermione told him.

"Won't the blood rush to their head when they wake up?"

"I don't think so." Hermione replied. "Their hair isn't falling down so for them, it's natural like this. But what about these?" She held the birds out to him. "Where did they come from?"

"I'm not sure, but I think I saw the black one in my dreamworld."

"Now that you mention it, there was a white bird just before I returned here."

"It said that it's other half was watching over you."

Hermione giggled. "So you two are married?" She stroked the ugly bird's head and it crooned in response.

"Anyway, I'm sure that neither Remus nor Knight wishes to spend their day sleeping." Harry grinned. "Ennervate." Nothing happened.

Harry sighed. It felt like every time they messed with their magic they had to re-teach themselves how to use their magic in the first place.

So Harry imagined the source of his magic, finding the ocean of magic before him, and pulled a strand of magic from it, shaped it as needed and tried once more. "Ennervate."

Both of them got up as if they'd never been asleep in the first place. Harry grinned.

"Harry? Hermione?" Remus asked. "You both look rather... colourful... and what are you both doing on the roof?"

"If you hadn't noticed, the beds are on our side." Hermione replied, rather bemused. "You're the ones upside down."

The revelation made both Knight and Remus cringe and raise their arms to protect their heads as if just knowing they were upside down was going to make them fall. Harry and Hermione both stifled laughs at their reaction.

"Where are the others?"

"Hopefully they got out." Knight replied and started walking across the roof to the study.

"Are you both alright?"

"We're fine, honestly."

"Never felt better."

While Harry and Hermione didn't have a problem accessing the room, both Knight and Remus were given pause by the steep three metre drop between the corridor and the training room, of which the study ran off of.

So as the two grown men negated the obstacle, Harry and Hermione continued on to the study.

The room was a complete mess, books everywhere. Even worse was the pink dragon snorting flames that licked at books which were spitting back at the flames, trying to hold them at bay.

Harry held out his arm protectively in front of Hermione. He couldn't believe his eyes. By far, the dragon wasn't fully grown or as large as a Hungarian Horntail, but it still filled all the available space in the room.

Beside the dragon was a young woman in black. She looked very pale and there was something familiar about her.

Harry edged around the dragon and awoke the sleeping woman, keeping his hand trained on her.

Her head shot up and she looked right at him. "Master! You're alright!"

As she spoke, Harry saw unmistakably the elongated canine teeth. "C-Cynwise?"

Hermione's eyes nearly popped out of her head. "Cynwise?"

"Yes?"

"You- You're all grown up..."

Suddenly, Harry started to understand what was going on and started chuckling to himself. He woke up the dragon beside him.

"Come on Luna you sleepy bones, the books are all singed."

"Harry? You shrunk."

Remus and Knight entered the cave and jumped with fright.

"Was it just you four in the cave?" Hermione asked them. The rouges all shook their heads.

"Minerva was here too." Knight said with a look of concern on his face.

"She went to get her emergency portkey." Cynwise told them.

Harry delegated the job of finding her to Remus and Knight while Hermione and He cleaned up the books.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Ever since he had woken up, everything was on its head. Well, Remus and Knight were, but having them as a point of reference didn't make anything clearer.

Harry and Hermione had returned from the dream world, and their home had become completely foreign to them.

The chairs no longer liked to be sat on. Those living in the residence typically had to summon the chairs and stun them so they wouldn't move about.

The books had become difficult to read. The majority of the books had developed personalities that depicted what they contained. It was not uncommon for them to strike up a conversation with whoever was reading it and they soon found that nobody knew a book's content better than that book.

Whenever there was something they needed to know it was typically faster to just ask the books which of them knew about something.

Still, books that covered knowledge of everything such as encyclopaedias or Hermione's beloved copy of Hogwarts: A History

allowed themselves to become sidetracked with other unrelated information rather easily.

With their help, they managed to find a spell to invert the gravity on Knight and Remus because everyone that was on the real floor were getting awfully sore necks when speaking to them.

Everybody that was in the cave that day had changed. They had originally thought it had just been Cynwise and Luna, but it became apparent rather quickly upon closer inspection.

Minerva had become younger, in her early thirties and her animagus form had changed from a cat to a tiger. She had found a strength inside herself that made her feel more sure and assertive in the cave.

Knight seemed to have changed the least. He had developed a much more defined body and certainly appeared younger, but with him it was hard to tell.

Remus had completely lost his scars and seemingly little more, but he just knew that something had changed the beast within him. The once-defence professor wasn't sure if he was afraid of the next full moon or whether he was actively looking forward to it.

Cynwise of course had obvious changes. Having grown up in a matter of seconds and regained her teeth, she struggled now to come to terms with the fact that her body no longer seemed to produce the hormones that kept her acting so childish for the last thousand years. Her brain was having a hard time adjusting and so she still acted rather stupidly at times.

Luna was now a young pink dragon.

Harry sighed as he leaned back in his chair. A young pink dragon that still obeyed every command Cynwise gave it. Worse still was that Luna had a new set of instincts that told her to hoard everything that glittered like a magpie.

And then there was Osfrid and Dobby.

Nobody had thought to even check on either of them, but Dobby just appeared rather happily to deliver lunch. He was now twice the height he previously was and had six arms which he insisted was perfect for cleaning and cooking.

If anybody thought that Dobby looked strange, they hadn't set their eyes on the Sorting Hat of Hogwarts which now sported monster truck wheels and a set of crab claws.

Yet, despite the changes in everyone, nobody complained at all about the changes to themselves; not to say they were all pleased with each other's changes. Luna was rather quickly moved into a cave of her own as she was simply too big to keep in the main cave.

It broke her heart that she couldn't stay in the glittery cave with all her jewellery she had stolen from the rouges while they hadn't been looking.

Harry was glad that it hadn't taken much to master the new method at getting to his magic, but he found that he had to be very careful with how much he drew. A slightly overpowered cutting spell had created a tunnel from one side of the cave to the other.

It had become very difficult for Harry to do spell-work using small levels. It was impossible for him to use Lumos without causing blindness, even at his lowest strands of magic. He had become thankful that Hermione had anticipated the problem and researched a spell for curing a burnt-out retina.

Apparating had become a minor issue as well as his arrivals were typically punctuated by large chunks of the ground being displaced and his enervate spells had kept their recipients up for four days straight without sleep. Because of this, Harry found himself so frustrated that he had to stop himself from using spells simply because he couldn't control them and instead found himself reluctantly relying on Hermione and the others to do his minor spell-work.

On the upside, his incredibly boost in magic had given him enough power to use legilimency and mind-control magic on even the Sorting Hat and in his spare time had the hat driving around the mountain range like a remote control car. Osfrid threatened to leave their home if he didn't stop, but secretly he enjoyed it.

Between the newlyweds, they were very happy that Hermione still had their baby growing inside of her.

Hermione's initial thought was that it had been conceived in the dream world and she had been under the impression it had been an immaculate conception.

The new and improved McGonagall had rather shortly informed her that it had been anything but immaculate; her stern mannerisms had not improved with age, or lack there of.

The only thing that Harry and Hermione did not like about the changes was that apparently, everyone who saw them could see their auras which, they soon figured out, changed colours with the emotions either of them were showing at the time.

The auras they were showing were on display to anybody and everybody unlike the auras McGonagall and Knight (the only two rogues capable of seeing auras) had ever seen in the past and because there was no hole to plug up, invisibility was no longer an option for either of them.

Worse yet was the fact that the Barons were completely unable to see each other's auras which gave the others a distinct advantage over Harry where Hermione's volatile emotions being broadcast told them just how to behave around her.

Despite the fact that Dobby had often insisted that they come to him for anything culinary or household maintenance related, Hermione often force Harry to cater to her every whim. He didn't particularly mind except for when she sent him on errands to get her three slices of bacon and pineapple pizza soaked in a bowl of milk at 3 in the morning.

Harry had watched her in morbid fascination eat something that he would never have considered normal. When he asked if she enjoyed the taste of the concoction she had glowered at him and replied quite calmly that it was what the baby wanted.

Harry seriously hoped that the baby learned to like more normal things after it was born.

Their lives had changed quite profoundly since the potion, and while Hermione protested against the idea, Harry had started participating in the raids that the werewolves and the rogues were commonly partaking in while simultaneously banning her from anything more than planning them.

With Harry helping them out, they had started hitting a lot more critical elements of Voldemort's new empire and military buildings had a habit of suddenly going missing altogether.

The Barons Black had an unspoken agreement that neither of them was going to attack Voldemort or Dumbledore until their baby was five.

It didn't take long for them to break that agreement however when two weeks before the new school year was about to start, Knight pulled Harry aside when he thought Hermione wasn't at home and handed him a newspaper clipping from the Daily Prophet.

Harry stared at it. The picture didn't mean much to him, but after reading the contents of it the clipping found itself scrunched up and his aura flared a deep black.

"We can't let her find out about this." Harry said. "There's no way I'll let her find out about this."

"Who find out about what?" Hermione said with a raised eyebrow from just behind him.

Harry jumped and turned around, thrusting the paper behind his back.

"Harry." She said in a deathly calm voice. "I know that face of yours. It's the same one you give me when you've snuck out for one of those expeditions of yours."

She wordlessly summoned the article.

Harry wanted the paper to combust in her hands, but couldn't bring himself to do it.

Hermione unfolded the paper and stared at the picture. "I-Impossible. He couldn't have... You mean he didn't...?"

"A few months ago, I did an audit of the dementors. It turned out that the ministry had none to administer the kiss. The paperwork was forged." Knight explained.

"You knew." She remarked dangerously, her aura going a murky grey.

"I had an idea, but there was still a chance they'd been killed some other way. So I didn't want to tell you until I had some solid proof they were still alive." Knight said quickly.

"Yet now you have solid proof and you gave it to Harry instead of me!"

Knight looked ashamed, but it was Harry who stood between them.

"You're expecting." Harry said simply. "You can't go and get them. Dumbledore will have a very close eye on them. Besides, I'm almost positive this is a tactic to draw us out."

"Who are you to tell me what I can and can't do Harry!" She screamed at him. "Those are my fucking parents!"

"I'll bring them back."

"I'm going."

"You're not." Harry insisted. "Even if I have to restrain you myself."

"He is mine to kill Harry! You get your dark lord, let me have mine!"

Harry held her by the shoulders and stared into her eyes. "Not until the baby is born."

Hermione held her wedding ring in front of him. "See this ring? You made a promise on this ring that you and I would stop Dumbledore together. You cannot stop me."

"Please you two!" Knight pleaded.

"Stay out of this!" They both yelled at him at the same time.

"No." Knight said, watching their auras change to a surprised yellow. "I think you should both do it. Hermione is unlikely to be a liability at this point Harry. The both of you together will ensure your success, but I still think you need to plan this."

"I'm positive that if you show walked in there the way you are, Hogwarts itself would turn against you and you can't exactly apparate in there you know."

Harry looked at Hermione, his worry showing as plain as day. "I really don't want to allow it Hermione. But I don't want to fight with you either."

"I'm going Harry." She said finally.

He sighed in defeat. "Then I won't stop you. We'll rescue them when they've sorted the first-years. That should give us ample time to plan."

His wife sighed with relief. She didn't want to make Harry angry, but he couldn't just keep her caged when her parents were under the control of Dumbledore.

"What I want to know... is how he's justifying having a couple of muggles as a Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher and a Transfiguration teacher." Knight queried to nobody in particular.

"He's just trying to draw us out before the school term even starts." Harry replied. "It would be rather amusing to see the look on his face if we let them teach for a day or two first." He caught the look on Hermione's face and continued. "But I'll just savour the thought."

"Get a few werewolves on reconnaissance. We'll start planning the attack immediately." Hermione announced.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Author's note:

Despite the size of this chapter (A healthy 22,000 words) the delay in getting this one done has not been in writing it but rather proof reading it. There was an awful lot of going back to change things though.

The story is now coming to a closing. I anticipate another 3-4 chapters, defiantly a chapter for Dumbledore, one for Voldemort and an epilogue of some sort a filler between Dumbledore and Voldemort. (Depending on whether I can write enough interesting things in the time between them. I've enjoyed writing this story, but I'm rather looking forward to working on something a bit more free-form rather than a challenge, but it was a nice way to get my foot in the door.

I've had my first few flames relatively recently. Not really flames per se, but people writing to inform me why they stopped reading it and while most seem to say that they might read something else I write in the future, the initial complaints seem to be that the story is too unrealistic and they typically point out flaws that really are inherent to the challenge itself. Not blaming Jayu at all, it was a cool challenge, but that mixed with the more in-depth plot made the challenge hard to stick to.

Personally, I feel like I crossed the line with Harry and Hermione's Auras being different colours when I did the whole 'flooded with magic' bit, but that's another requirement of the challenge for when they meet up with Dumbldore.

I promise you gore lovers lots of splattering over the next couple of chapters. Who's blood? Well, that I'll let you guess. Depends on who Dumbledore could call to his side.

I'd also like to thank everyone who has reviewed my story to date, especially those that do it every chapter. I'm not the type to ask people to review, seeing a positive and/or constructive comment really makes my day. Thanks to you all!

And on one final note before I leave you to peruse the other fics at this site, it might interest you to know that the two omake's that follow weren't really put there because I thought they were amusing, they were actually cut scenes from the story itself. Particularly the first one was actually the opening scene of this chapter when I first wrote it.

--Steven

update

As I said in the beginning notes, this chapter doesn't seem to have been as well recieved as others, mainly in the changes to the characters. The whole point of it is to get Minerva, Remus and Luna more involved in the fighting ahead. When I thought about how to do it, this seemed like a good way to pull it off, but I couldn't exactly have Luna change in some minor way, that's just not how I portrayed her so far. Likewise, you needn't worry, Cynwise is still the same little girl in mind, luna is still a vampire beneath the pink scales and the hat well... that was jus something I always wanted to do to it :P

Having said that, if it really bothers you, continue to let me know and I'll consider rewriting the chapter.

Omake #5:I am your leader

Petunia Dursley was sitting in front of the TV watching the morning news.

"Last night, the worst thing that has befallen our country in recent times has occurred. A previously unknown threat has emerged and murdered our queen and all of the direct heirs to the throne.

"The bodies of our beloved monarchy and her government were all found in the courtyard in front of Buckingham palace."

Vernon stomped down the stairs and grouched his way to the table. "What's this? I don't think they should be displaying things like that in the morning. How are good people supposed to eat their breakfast with that on the TV screen?" He grumbled as he saw the gruesome image of the royal family on their screen.

"Vernon..."

"Wait, some people are coming out of Buckingham palace."

"Who's that over there?" A robed figure called.

"Isn't that one of those 'Noose' people they talk about?" Another black-robed figure asked.

"Settle down." A man with seemingly no nose called to them. "So, you are the people responsible for informing muggles of what happens?"

"Ummm... that's right..." She replied.

"I have something to tell them all." He said. "How does that work?"

"You... you just speak into the camera."

Voldemort gave her an odd look and put his mouth against the lens. "I am your new King Voldemort."

Someone could be heard snickering, it was impossible to tell who it was.

Vernon frowned. "If this is the news, it's a pretty poor joke."

"What are you laughing about? You've tricked me haven't you?" Voldemort screamed. "Crucio!"

The television's image suddenly became distorted enough that it was hard to make out what was happening.

"Well that looks rather lame." Vernon said. "You'd think for a morning show with the budget they get nowadays they could have better special effects than that. And look at that guy's face, he needs to spend more time in the make-up department."

The camera shook violently and the next thing you could see was a cracked lens.

"Avada Kedavra!"

"Just change the channel Petunia. I would like to watch something more sophisticated."

Petunia glared at him. "Do you know who that was?"

"What, is he some famous actor or something?"

"THAT! Vernon Dursley was the man who killed..." She was breaking down into sobs. "That was the man who murdered my sister!"

"Your sister was murdered by an actor?"

She opened her mouth and shook her head, painfully aware of how stupid her husband was right now. She clenched her fists and slapped Vernon across the face before storming out of the house to go and cry on a friend's shoulder.

Right now, she didn't care what the neighbours thought.

Omake #6:Dobby cooks

Once Harry and Hermione had gotten dressed, they stepped out in the hope of getting some food, but all of Dobby's stashes had been turned into cutlery. They now had enough cutlery to feed everybody at both Hogwarts and the Ministry but no food to actually eat.

Dobby did however manage to find some food in the house. A couple of eggs and set to making an omelette.

Imagine his frustration when he cracked the egg on the side of the frying pan and out flopped a featherless bird that started making an awful racket.

"Dobby!" Hermione called out. "What is all that noise?"

"Dobby is sorry Mistress! Lunch is will be late." Dobby called back.
"These eggs is not in their date!"

Chapter 12 - Reign's End

The Void was the name of the mountains that Harry's comrades all called home. Given that when someone had been brave enough to go exploring, they got to an edge that didn't seem to end and a tracking charm on a rock thrown off the side proved that it was still falling, 3 days later.

Apparating to the other edge of the forest, everybody had been surprised to find a huge crater where the mountain used to be that was very slowly filling with magma from the Earth, and water from the rivers that flowed through the region giving a pool of steam from the centre of it all.

So the only access to and from their home was via portkey or apparating. This suited Harry perfectly as it made their home completely untraceable, even if the fidelius wasn't still intact, you couldn't exactly tell someone "Oh yeah, just go find the huge crater in Norway, we're somewhere around there, but not really."

The Void was nowhere, in a place of its own, and to get there, you had to have been brought there once and with the entire place under an anti-apparition ward except for a small room which had identifying charms placed on it, there was no other way of a stranger getting into the place.

Because of that, the once scared werewolves slowly become more relaxed. Living in caves did not appeal to them originally, but as the wizards amongst them placed a few charms around the place, transfigured trees into beds and built baths that could be heated.

The sky was permanently a wavering plasma purple-blue which emitted a soft light that proved to be safe for the resident vampire and her vampire-dragon charge.

Children were very happy to play amongst the trees or on Luna who found no shame in being a jungle gym for them. Occasionally, Hermione and Harry would wonder down to the area just to watch them and try to learn some of the things that a book just could not

teach, such as how parents behaved when one child bullied another or they fell over.

Those parents in particular were very eager to offer advice, some wanted, some unwanted and everybody had an opinion on what to do for certain problems like morning sickness which was starting to set in.

When Harry had asked Ben Whittle about how he disciplined his children, Ben was honest. "A belt around the ears keeps them in line. Though, when they were really bad and stole from the neighbour I had them whipped."

That, Harry thought was rather extreme. When he asked Silvia Augustwater about the same problem, she said that she had petrified them for twelve hours without relief or food, them being too young to fight it off, it was rather effective for her children.

Harry asked her what a child should do if the parents did something wrong, she smiled kindly and told him that the child should report the problem to a higher authority. The teenager scoffed. There was no higher authority any more.

Silvia however didn't agree and told her that she expected her children to let the Rogues know if she did something really bad.

Harry paled, but in a way, he didn't mind. Telling himself that he was the Last Dark Lord once more and that people would of course expect him to rule, he could deal with a family dispute until he had an entire country to run. Unfortunately, after that he would have to delegate it to someone else.

Then Silvia asked her lords if they'd seen a midwife.

The couple shared a look and Hermione blushed. The werewolf shook her head in disappointment and immediately dragged both of them to the prison cells where the healers they'd taken from St Mungos were.

Of the six healers they had 'acquired', four of them had subverted to their side after the state of things had been explained to them,

especially as word got through that Voldemort had taken control of muggle Britain and declared the Ministry of Magic guerrilla group.

Then he had attacked St. Mungos, killing all patients and abducting any healers who survived. After that, it was possible to release the other two from their prison cell.

When they were all questioned about a midwife, the eldest of the group, Bertha, mentioned that she had been a midwife sixty years ago, but at least for the first few weeks, any of them knew how to check her health.

Hermione had never been afraid of doctors, her parents had taught her that at a very young age, but she was afraid of the idea they might tell her the baby was in bad shape. Nobody could foresee what their ritual would do to the baby.

When she was given the all-clear, she breathed a sigh of relief.

With the nervousness of checking on the baby over with, Harry excused himself to speak with the werewolves.
.o'OoOoO'o.

The biggest problem that the group faced once the decision to attack Hogwarts was made was that the battle of Erskine had made a lot of them too scared to go to fight again.

There were a number of werewolves that would follow Harry to the end of the Earth and back again, but many wanted nothing more than to keep away from any such fighting in the future and while Harry understood this completely, Fenrir was not so forgiving.

For many of them, their reluctance to go to battle made many of them seem like cowards, but his words of vengeance had turned a few more to their cause, but there was the danger of a large rift appearing between the werewolves until Harry himself met with them all as he had once before for a pep-talk.

He hadn't memorised every name in the community, but he knew everyone by face at the very least.

The talk was uncomfortable, but truthful.

“The battle upcoming is as much a personal battle for my wife and I, but it is also going to be a major turning point in the war when Dumbledore bites the dust.

“This battle doesn’t concern many of you. Talks of revenge are only useful in our battle against Voldemort, I truly hope that you’ll stand with me on that day to avenge your fallen comrades. However our upcoming battle is not your war to fight, and thus, I will not ask you to fight in this battle.

“There are no traps this time, only uncertainties. The werewolves that have sworn fealty to me will be defending our attacking group from the denizens of the forbidden forest, if, and I mean, if, Dumbledore calls for aide from them. They will be fighting centaurs, wood nymphs, water nymphs. There may be a hippogriff or two.

“The rogue vampires in there have been dealt with, there was once a giant there, but from what we can tell that has been moved, if Grawp does show up, you can expect Luna to help you dispatch it.

“Reports so far have shown that there is already a battle waging in that forest between the centaurs and the acromantulas and given the nature of many of the other beasts, Dumbledore would not approach them for help.”

He allowed the werewolves time to digest the information given.

“Those participating in the fight will be using wolfsbane that we can trust. Before the full-moon spell is used, you’ll be disillusioning each other. You will need to avoid each other by smell. This should help especially against centaurs.

“Anybody that still wishes to stay behind, that is perfectly acceptable. I need guards for any prisoners taken, we need someone to help our medical staff.

“Lastly, anybody with at least one child, I ask that at least one of the parents stay behind.”

Harry wasn't sure how his announcement would be received so he waited patiently and when nobody responded, his nervousness built. “That is all.”

“Have you an idea how many enemies we'd be facing?” A young man who had taken up smithing asked.

“If all of you were to fight, we'd have just over a two to one advantage.” Harry said. “That is what I have heard. But I want to make this exactly clear. If there are too many enemies to fight, I expect each and every one of you to portkey back here and remember, the mission is to defend, long enough for the Baroness to retrieve her parents. After that, you may all leave.”

Harry looked around as the murmuring picked up again. “I shall leave you all to discuss this, I would appreciate a response in a few days.”

He jumped down from the large tree they'd cut down to act as a platform where a few werewolves spoke to him to clear up his plans and get an accurate picture of what he was asking.

When he'd satisfied their curiosity, he walked back to the cave and found Hermione feeding the two baby birds they seemed to have inherited.

She had an eye dropper and was dipping it into a beaker containing what looked like napalm or something.

He knelt beside her and watched the white bird stretch its neck to get some of the flammable liquid.

She looked briefly at him, worry creased along her face. “Nobody has managed to feed them at all, they just won't eat. The white one is only just now taking stuff from me but the black one won't open its beak at all. I'm quite worried... Maybe it's sick.”

“May I try?”

Hermione handed him the beaker.

The white phoenix suddenly shut its gob and the black one reached for the dropper instead.

“Thank Merlin... Somehow, I’m not surprised.” She breathed in relief.

Harry scooped up the bird in his hands and put a few more drops of the liquid down the bird’s throat.

“Don’t let that touch your hands dear.” Hermione warned him.

“We’ve gotta think of some names for these little guys.”

“I’ve already got a name for the white one. Aelred.”

“Aelred? What kind of a name is that?” Harry asked, not really liking the sound of it.

Hermione held the bird close to her bosom. “In memory of someone close to Cynwise.”

Suddenly the name didn’t sound so bad. “Maybe I should ask her for an appropriate name for this little guy. They’re like twins.”

Hermione looked startled for a moment.

Harry placed his hand on her back and she looked at him with wonder in her eyes. “It spoke! It said its name!”

The black bird screeched and Harry knew it wasn’t done feeding.

Hermione petted her bird as Harry resumed to feeding his charge.

“We still need to start coming up with names for our baby.” Harry said.

“Have anything in mind?” The mother asked with a pleased smile on her face, glad that he was the one who had brought it up before she did.

“For a boy, I was thinking perhaps Shannon.”

“And for a girl?”

Harry shook his head and dripped another few drops down the bird's throat and placed it back in its box. “I think you've had enough for now.”

Again with the awful squawk this time however, Harry got the distinct impression that the bird wanted to go wherever he went.

It wasn't until the next day however before Harry managed to catch up with Cynwise and ask her for a name from the same era as Aelred. She told him she'd think about it later, as she'd promised to go and play on the new swings with the other kids that Andy (one of the werewolves) had made for them.

That was fine with Harry, his tag-along though once more showed its displeasure at being put second-place. Harry started getting annoyed. “You're more demanding than my wife is, you know that?”

“Your high maintenance and opinionated, you know that?”

A single word rattled his brain, jumping straight past his mental defences. “ME!”

“Typical that would be your first word to me wouldn't it?” He grouched as he held his head.

Aelred had started tagging around with Hermione, much more placid in personality, its demands were typically voiced with quiet chirps. They both learned to perch on their shoulders the instant they were put there which helped Harry tremendously as carrying the bird around was tiring.

Already they were starting to look healthier and fluff was starting to give way to feathers already.

Still, having the bird with him all the time was starting to really get on his nerves, especially when he wanted some alone time with Hermione or discussing battles with the Rogues. When they were both studying spells or doing planning alone, the birds were both quite reasonable and were content to play with each other on the desk, slightly away from the couple as they scribbled and swapped ideas.

Harry had decided to draw Dumbledore out into the courtyard for the battle as it would give more space to dodge and would cause minimal damage to Hogwarts than if it were staged in the Great Hall.

When that was decided, they needed a fool proof method of getting him out into the open like where he could not force the battle anywhere else.

Hermione suggested they find doppelganger charm that Bellatrix had used. That way they could stay outside while egging him out, he'd have no choice but to come to them.

Unfortunately for the both of them, not one of the books they had knew the charm she'd used and thus Hermione was relegated to recreating the spell which didn't seem like it would be too hard given the number of spells they'd crafted in the past.

Two days later she'd still be tearing her hair out, but at least Harry finally had a name for his Phoenix: Wilheard meaning Strong-willed. He thought it was rather appropriate and the bird didn't mind.
.o'OoOoO'o.

"The work on the crown is reportedly finished my liege." Mulciber replied.

"Mulciber." Voldemort said testily. "How long have I been waiting for this crown?"

“Far too long your majesty.” He replied and braced himself for the pain he knew would come shortly.

Voldemort grinned. “That look on your face is good. I like it. Come forward.”

Mulciber rose from the ground and approached the Dark Lord who placed his wand to his arm and summoned his Death Eaters who very quickly started appearing and filling his throne room.

“Send for my star-crossed.” He ordered Mulciber who quickly raced off, fighting the flow as everyone moved to their designated seating places.

It took a while to traverse the palace to where Susan Bones was being held. There were ten bolts that held her door shut, two of them magic resistant that had to be opened with keys that each of the two guards beside her door held.

Proof enough that she was a special trophy of the Dark Lord.

With a nod to the two men, they each undid the locks on her door, allowing the hardened ex-criminal (which was the result of all laws being declared null and void when Voldemort took his throne) to enter the room.

Susan Bones’ face was not all that dissimilar from someone who had only just been put under the imperious, with the exception that she did not smile. It was the look of someone who just didn’t care anymore.

Her wrists were scarred and pussy, a sound reminder of her trying to kill herself using wood from her bed. The wounds had been healed, but nobody had removed the splinters.

Other than that, she was dressed beautifully in a scarlet red robe, reading a book from England’s past. She was well fed, thanks to the

gratuitous use of the imperious to make her eat after she'd tried starving herself to death.

She knew what Voldemort expected of her and wanted nothing more than to escape the place, yet the man formerly known as Tom Riddle had expressed that she was not to be tortured, sexually harassed or treated as anything less than an imprisoned member of royalty.

“Your king wishes you to be present. Come.”

She placed a bookmark in her book and rose to follow him back to the throne room where everything was finally getting settled down.

She was lead to a central chair facing the ruler of Voldemort who looked on with a passive face upon the proceedings.

When everyone was quiet, Voldemort began an impressive speech about the devotion of his followers and his right to rule the land, that with his crown being placed upon his head, his most faithful would receive the rewards long deserving to them.

A moment later, everybody rose for Lucius Malfoy and his Wife Narcissa as they brought forth the crown, with the man who unlocked it following nervously behind them.

When they finally made it to the steps, Voldemort pointed a bony finger at Susan and gestured for her to come forward.

She did so silently and stood near him.

“You shall be the one to crown me.” He said softly. “This is quite an honour for you.”

“You should give it to someone who wishes for the honour. Your majesty.” She said softly, though practically spitting the last two words.

“I give it to someone who deserves it, whether they wish it or not.” He gestured to Malfoy to bring forth the crown.

The velvet pillow was brought before them and Susan gently picked up the crown and hesitated while she considered crowning the bastard in a completely different way, but what did it matter? He had won anyway.

She placed the crown on his head and turned away from him as the crowd roared in glee.

When the properly crowned king had enough of it all, he raised his wand and everyone quietened.

He gestured to the arithmancer set to work on the crown who came forth.

“You have delayed this ceremony by weeks. I gave you four days to unlock this crown. Tell your king why.”

“I... My lord... I...”

“Avada Kedavra!” A roar of approval rang through the hall.

“This day, begins the eternal reign of King Voldemort! Your master is pleased!”

The truth was that the real crown was hiding away in a secret place, he had been unable to decipher what the spells were as they seemed incomplete. The extra time taken were simply because he had an exact duplicate made with as many of the spells he could guess placed on it.
.o'OoOoO'o.

“Checkmate.” Remus frowned.

Harry sighed. “Okay, I won’t do that again...” It was a rather unusual chess board in front of them in that the pieces actually had identities rather than generic names.

The mini Harry in front of him was sending little red streaks of light at the real one in front of him as Harry tried to knock him over.

“I don’t think that this is a very fair representation of the real world though Harry. I’m not Dumbledore so I have no real idea how he would think.”

“Yeah, you’re right.” Harry agreed readily. “I’m just hoping to run through as many scenarios as possible. But I’m concerned that if Hermione doesn’t finish those modifications to the doppelganger charm soon, we’ll need to re-think our whole strategy.”

“I still don’t understand why you even need it.” Remus commented.

“We need to draw him outside. Luna will not be effective outside. Using her we can make quick work of any resistance.”

“I’m more worried about her stepping on us.”

“Give her some time Remus, she may be a klutz at the moment, but unlike the rest of us, her entire body changed. She can’t even walk around on two legs anymore. That’s got to take some getting used to.” Harry reasoned.

He knew that Remus was less than fond of the girl since the night she decided to dance outside at 2 in the morning, shaking the mountains all around with every uncoordinated stomp.

“What seems to be the problem with that charm anyway?”

“Every time she’s had me test out the prototype, I tend to get this amalgam of glue on the floor that disintegrates in a couple of seconds. Kinda like the pumpkin pudding at Halloween at Hogwarts.”

Remus chuckled. “Sounds delicious. On a completely unrelated note, had any ideas what you’re going to do for your birthday in three weeks?”

“I’ve got no plans whatsoever. They don’t mean much to me, never really have...”

Harry smiled and reached for the cup of tea sitting next to him and took a sip. He frowned disgustedly at the tea for its coldness and cast a mild warming charm on the cup which promptly exploded.

The werewolf fell off his chair in surprise and glanced up worriedly at Harry who pulled a piece of china out of his hand and winced in pain.

This action brought his mind back to the last time he had to pull crockery out of his hands and suddenly had an idea. “On second thoughts, I do know what I’d like to do for my birthday.”

“Oh?”

Harry grinned evilly, got up out of his chair and moved to explain what he wanted for his birthday to Hermione, who’s eyes lit up at the idea and said she knew just the thing.

.o’OoOoO’o.

It never ceased to amaze Harry how extensive the intelligence network he had really was and how most of it had been in place since the moment they had officially broken away from Voldemort’s servitude.

As it would seem, there were three main players in the intelligence game. Each capable of getting information from different parts of the wizarding world through contacts that showed allegiance to no particular side; with the exception of Wormtail who didn’t seem to have many friends in any world, but was however very well versed at retrieving information via torture and blackmail.

Eager to prove himself to Harry that he was trustworthy very few people that were captured from the enemy were able to keep quiet forever and were killed despite empty promises that it would save their lives.

The worst part of the spy game was that the very hint of information had twice been their undoing. Careless questions and blatant probing had given an informant enough information to tell another investigator what it was that they had been interested in which lead to the ruin of a plan involving food stores and the loss of fifteen werewolves.

Harry ordered the informer's death. He had been very angry and took the loss of lives as his own fault even if it had been Knight's carelessness.

But in all fairness, Knight had been an auror, but his glory days were long gone and his skills in intelligence gathering had gotten rusty since he'd become a Death Eater. He was a trainer and a soldier.

With this in mind, Harry did not punish knight. He had truly hoped though that his intelligence network would be more bulletproof than the other dark lords around the place. But as he learned that day, there was no such thing as a bulletproof intelligence network and that information was available to the highest bidder. Worse still was the realisation that his own arrogance had made him complacent when he reflected that both of his nemesis had a lot more experience in this game.

One thing that Harry did not know, but would have been pleased to, was that any specific information that got to either Dumbledore or Voldemort was purely second hand knowledge that tended to come from the people that the werewolves would go to for stuff that could not be found at the void, and that second hand knowledge for the most part was rather useless apart from knowing about the improvement in the way that the werewolves were being treated by their overlord.

The fact was that given the betrayals and backstabbing that had occurred between the minions of all three Dark Lords, they were starting to play their hands close to their chests. Nobody had any clue what Dumbledore had planned for when the attempt would be made to rescue Hermione's parents, but neither did he know when the Barons Black would knock at his door either.

Voldemort had suspicions about what was going on, but the idea that the two were keeping each other amused meant that he could focus solely on his attacks on the ministry which thus far, the Barons Black had not lifted a finger against.

He did however have other plans that would affect them. After he had completed his conquest of England, involving an attack on the ministry, he was already planning a retaliation attack on the Vampires and was already amassing vampire hunters with which to take care of the traitors who dared not join him.

This kind of information was hard for Voldemort to keep silent as many of them would not swear loyalty to Voldemort and instead only to their own countries, their loyalty only overridden by their hate for Vampires.

Talks in pubs had eventually gotten to Fenrir through one of his werewolves. Talks said that they were already a thousand strong.

The Last Dark Lord frowned and immediately disappeared to speak with Dotworth.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry met with Dotworth alone, this time without his other half who was training and exercising.

Their location was quite different from the last time he had met the eternal Vampire they were patrolling what appeared to be either abandoned homes or perhaps just room for further growth.

“We’ve received word that Voldemort is planning on launching an all out attack on the vampires for joining me.” Harry informed Dotworth as he inspected a home.

They were mildly Japanese in that there were wooden floorboards and rice-paper doors, but the rest of the designs were defiantly western in origin.

“I see. We have anticipated it, but I trust your sources are reliable.”

“I trust the man I hear it from, but I don’t trust intelligence.” Harry replied with a snort. “I listen to what they have to say and plan accordingly, but I’ve been lead into too many traps. Planning for the most part is the only thing that has kept us alive.”

“I believe your encounter at Erskine was more our intervention than any planning on your behalf.”

Harry tipped his head. “Don’t think I’m ungrateful.” He replied in response. “However, while I was not a party to the discussions, it seems to me that there was some measure of planning for your timely response, by Cynwise was it not? There was no possible way for you to organise that many Vampires to come to our aide without any prior warning at all.”

“That is a point I will give you, Cynwise did call in a favour that every one of us owed her, however we vampires will not come to your aide without that proof I mentioned in the past that you are indeed the Last Dark Lord.” The old vamp informed him. “Have you thought on how you plan to do this?”

Harry handed him a newspaper clipping that was crumpled up. “I do not expect this to mean much to you, but it means a lot to my Dark Lady. This piece of paper is the start of an event that will prove these claims.”

His ally read over the paper and found that it did indeed mean nothing to him. “I do not understand.”

“Keep your ear to the ground friend, and in the meantime if Voldemort tries attacking you before I get word of it, have Cynwise or Luna come get me, my men will be here to help defend your home.”

Dotworth nodded and held out his hand. “We appreciate the offer.”

Harry took his hand. “Ralph. Ralph Dotworth.”

The human grinned. "Harry Potter. I look forward to building a new world with you."

"Your attitude is inspiring. I look forward to this event you're planning."

"I'm more looking forward to the aftermath." Harry smiled mysteriously.

"You almost make me wish to turn you, if nothing more than so I can force you to tell me what you're up to."

Harry did not respond and instead, they passed the last house and started moving deeper into the mountain that housed the Vampires.

"I am curious to know if I do not overstep my bounds, exactly what it was that Cynwise did that made vampires willing to lie their lives down because she asked you to."

Ralph seemed to fight himself as to whether or not to respond to the young man then after a moment, came to a decision.

"A short time ago, I think it was probably the 1870s I think..." Harry grinned and covered his mouth. "Yes, I suppose that's a long time for you but... It doesn't matter. We were a very free flowing race back then we turned who we wanted, we feasted on others. It didn't matter. I mean to say, we did have standards of course. Only the best would be chosen to become one of us.

"Up until that point, we were the top of the food chain. Nobody except a few vampire hunters were able to kill us off, however they were very rarely equipped to handle more than one of us. Then one day, a middle-aged human turned up. Couldn't have been more than 40 years old.

"He'd apparently promised the crown that he would drive us out of their country and formed what could only be described as a battalion of vampire hunters and wizards. He trained others until they outnumbered us two to one. That's a lot of humans I needn't tell you.

“His name was Richard Dumbledore. Father of the well known Albus. He was a heartless bastard but open in his ambitions.

“There was a point which mounted a showdown. Us versus them. It looked as though it was going to be a bloody battle and neither of us could have predicted what was going to happen.

“We had tried assassinating their leaders in the night, however our numbers were not sufficient to kill off even one of their leaders, and then she came along.

“While I never saw exactly what happened, it seems that your young friend took it up on herself to go and play in amongst the wizards and hunters camp at night where she happened upon young Albus being scolded by his father.

“I understand that he scolded her at being in the campus and as he went to find who she belonged to, she bit him and I believe that while she never meant to, she did in fact turn him.

“We heard screams in the night and ran to see what was happening when we found that Cynwise was killing their own people in the camps, apparently starting with the top brass and moving down.

“My sire was leading the battle and soon gave a call to arms at which we all joined in the fight and all but wiped them out, but nobody had a higher body count than that girl. She possessed a strange sword which was able to cut through wizard shields. She was terrifying, but without her initiative, there was no way that could have come out with so many lives. She literally saved my life twice that night, however my sire was killed.

“Albus, as you know escaped that night and Cynwise... well... I'm sure you know her well enough to know what she's like. After that she went to just acting like a petulant child. Many of us were quite embarrassed that she succeeded where so many failed.

“What we didn’t find out till much later is that her Master, Aelred, had been kept prisoner there and we vampires are, she felt the death of her master and that is what caused her to do it.”

Harry nodded gave a pained grin. “She’s funny like that. Even now that she’s grown up, she isn’t all that different. Still, she asked my wife to name her phoenix after Aelred.”

“He was a great man, I’m sure he’d be happy to have had an eternal creature named after him.

“It was shortly after all of that, Albus caught up with her alone and managed to catch her and have her put on trial for her causing the death of his father. The official statement says that she turned him and he was forced to kill his own father.” Ralph concluded the story. “And now that you’ve brought it up, I think I shall ask for your story on how that happened in exchange for the tale I just told you.”

Harry grinned and told what he understood happened that night.

When the story was told, Dotworth asked for a demonstration of Harry’s power, but the Baron was unsure what kind of magic he could do without damaging something, he wasn’t going to try blowing up anything while he was in a cave and he didn’t want to try blinding himself yet again, so Harry asked for a raincheck.

With that over, Harry decided that it was time to get back to doing some non-diplomatic work and excused himself to attend to his wife who probably throwing up again by now and in need of moral support, lest her mood swings be taken out on someone undeserving.

His contact with the vampire world smiled and wished him the very best of luck and was left duly stunned as Harry took a chunk out of the cave as he apparated away.

The night’s discussion however left one question left in Harry’s mind about the childish Vampire. How the hell did she know McGonagall if she’d been in prison for a hundred and twenty five years.

The answer was easily forthcoming from the witch as the vampire was unwilling to respond, deliberately ignoring the question and instead, inviting him to play "Go Fish" with her, Luna and little Benjamin, one of the werewolf cubs.

Minerva told her that every few years, Albus would parade her in front of his Defence Against the Dark Arts class as a prime example of what vampires could look like. That was before she lost her teeth however, which had only happened in the last 50 years as she recalled.

With that in mind, Harry promised himself that he would never inquire of Cynwise any further details. He wondered how it must feel for a vampire to be sentenced to life in Azkaban. That was a completely different scale of time.

Hermione was still in the training room, practising her movements against knight and doing rather well. Watching her, Harry was able to see that she wouldn't be a liability for this mission except for the emotional concern he felt even watching her spar.

Part of him wanted to curse Knight but knowing that being so completely overprotective would only piss off his wife and wouldn't help make sure she was in top shape for the upcoming battle. He needed to make sure that she had every advantage possible.

Even as he watched, Harry couldn't help but acknowledge that she was beautiful and graceful in a way that refuelled a fire that had dulled down after a night of familial activities the night before.

When Harry offered to take over for knight and spar with her, she declined and mentioned she was at the end of her strength. Knight nodded and asked Harry how his meeting with the vampires went.

Harry told the truth without giving away the vampire's history. It was not something they wished shared and Harry would respect that. The meeting went well and that they could expect no help from the Vampires until after the night.

This put Knight's nose a bit out of joint as he desperately wanted as many allies as he could muster. Harry however told him to make do and explained that they were not allies as yet. They were merely an interested party in negotiations. The prize at the end looked nice, but without a demonstration of power, Harry's words were just that.

With that said, Harry ejected knight from the building and turned to his wife, with a look of adoration in his eyes.

"Have I told you how beautiful you are today?"

Hermione conjured a towel and started drying her forehead of sweat. "Not today you haven't, but I'm not sure I believe you."

"Oh?" The husband replied.

"Well, you haven't exactly done a conclusive study on it. I think you should join me for a bath before you even consider giving results as conclusive."

Harry put on his best Victor Krum impression. "wery vell, ve shall haf to moof to phase two zen before I submit my report to you. Please, test subjekt numba one, remoof your attire."

Hermione laughed and smacked him upside the head. "Your impressions are awful."

"You're right, I can't even impersonate a Dark Lord properly. I'm not sure why though, it's either because I smile too much or because my evil laugh isn't quite believable yet?"

"Oh?" His beloved asked amusedly. "I didn't even know you had an evil laugh, when did this develop? I think you should show it to me before you try using it in public."

Harry thought for half a second before giving a high pitched girly giggle with a curious sigh that raised in pitch at the end. Hermione couldn't believe the noise coming from his mouth and laughed till she was crying.

“Harry, that is not evil, that is creepy!”

Harry lead her into the bathroom. “Can you offer any suggestions for improvement then?”

Hermione started removing her training clothes. “Yeah, give it up.”

Harry watched serenely as she unclasped her bra and removed her pants and underwear.

When she was naked, he approached her and started running his hands over her. She shivered in pleasure. “Feels wonderful darling, why don’t you come join me in the bath?”

Harry grinned and did ask she asked. Harry’s report hadn’t changed after he’d seen her naked and clean. She was still stunning.

Hermione however insisted that he needed to do phase 3 yet, how she looked over time. She worried if he would still say the same things when she was round as a beach ball.

Harry however, told her that he could see the future and saw that she was still beautiful even then. He kissed her passionately and she rewarded him for his attempts at keeping her happy.
.o’OoOoO’o.

“Come forth Severus and give me the news I wish to hear.”

“Your Majesty. Dumbledore recently put into place a trap to lure out the Granger girl using her parents as bait, using them as teachers and deliberately advertising their appointment in the newspapers.”

“I was under the impression they were muggles were they not?”

“That is my understanding sir. I believe it is simply a ruse to bring the Barons black out of hiding and nothing more.”

“And?”

“They have not so much stuck their noses out yet, the old man believes that they intend to appear on the first of September.”

“And what say your sources about the Baron’s force?”

“Nothing my lord. As far as we can tell, they have vanished off the face of the earth.”

“Bullshit Severus! They have been attacking my facilities! Those blasted flea-bitten werewolves have been attacking my food supplies!”

Severus backed up against a desk as Voldemort stood and turned on him.

“Information on where they are hiding is scarce. We have a few prisoners from his camp, from the attacks on those facilities, but when asked where their base is, they all say ‘The Void’, which I’d assume is the name of the place. Thus far, we’ve managed to track the place to Norway by ripping the information from their heads, but the problem is that when we went to the place they described, there was nothing there but a hole in the ground.”

Voldemort lifted his eyebrow. “I see.” The image running through his mind was little more than a mine-shaft.

“It matters not. Potter will keep the old man indisposed long enough for us to launch our attack on the ministry on the first. You are to use your Dark Mark to inform me when the time arises.”

“It will be done my lord.”

“Now then, what of your other project?”

“I have had to increase my staff to twenty and thus far, none of them have come up with anything satisfactory. We have heard news of a method called ‘IVF’, however it is a muggle method that seems so far to be most promising.”

“Unacceptable. Do you propose that the muggles are capable of doing anything better than us?”

“N-No my lord. I just meant that it is all we have found so far. I’m certain we can find something, otherwise we’ll have to see about creating a method ourselves.”

“Get another twenty working on that now Severus. I give you permission to use any woman in this country for the research except for my star-crossed.”

“Thank you my lord. I shall endeavour to get your desired result as soon as I can.”

“See that you do Severus. My patience is waning.”
.o’OoOoO’o.

Hermione grinned to herself in the dark. This was just the kind of break she needed.

Everyone was being overly protective of her and getting them to agree to her participating in Harry’s birthday present. She could appreciate why they were desperately trying to keep her out of the loop, but she couldn’t help but feel animosity about it.

She would not be a liability at this point in her pregnancy.

Hermione shook the thoughts from her head. This was not a day to think about these things. They were on a mission.

This was not a mission out of need. There would be no Death Eaters, Order members or political figures killed in this mission. There would be no food pilfered.

It was quite childish really when she thought about it.

“What do you want for your birthday?” She had asked him when he had brought it up earlier.

“Right now, I have everything I could ever want. I have a beautiful wife, my first little ‘un on the way, and more magical power than I know what to do with.” He had replied earnestly. “Short of killing two people I really despise.” His eyes had flickered to the large pile of paper that had floor plans of Hogwarts, copied from the marauder’s map. It did not work from Norway, it was unable to pick up who was in the place, but it would be invaluable when they moved to attack the castle. “We’re not ready for that yet however.

“So, what could a guy with everything want for his birthday? Remus got me thinking and I decided that what I want for my birthday... Is a drill.”

“A drill?” Hermione asked. “I know that you have been having troubles with your ‘home improvement’ spells, but I really don’t think a drill will work, we have no electricity.”

“Oh, I have no reason to use it. More for revenge.”

Hermione wondered why getting a drill would account for revenge on anybody and hadn’t found out until she had asked Minerva if she understood the significance of it.

Now she knew. A light flickered silently on her wrist, a signal for her to slice off the service door and dash inside, Cynwise right behind her.

With a loud whoosh, the ceiling caved and showered all the midnight workers in glass, many of them screamed but found themselves suddenly silenced, which caused them to panic even more.

Harry appeared before them wearing the same suit of armour that had worn to the wedding, now restored to its original looks.

“Ladies and Gentlemen!” Harry called, making them all stop dead in their tracks and look towards him. “I’m looking for Vernon Dursley, he is here isn’t he?” He pointed to a man and released his silencing. “Where is he?” Harry asked menacingly.

“He... he... he’s not here...” The man stuttered in fear.

“He’s not?” Harry asked in surprise and looked at Wormtail who cowered. “You said he was rostered on tonight...”

“He w-was...” The man replied. “But he called in, h-his wife is sick.”

Harry sighed, his fearsome image crumbling immediately. “Well that sucks.” He said. “Well, I’m still going to take every drill you have.”

“We... don’t make drills.”

“Yeah you do.” Harry replied as he walked over to a conveyor belt. “What do you call...” He picked up what he thought was a drill and instead found a crude fully automatic machine gun. “...this?”

“It’s... it’s a gun sir.”

Hermione approached Harry who turned to her and gave a disappointed smile. “No Vernon, no drills.”

“Is that a machine gun in your hand?” She asked him.

“Yeah, looks like the Death Eaters have overrun this place.” Harry called to the invisible dragon sticking her head through the roof. “Luna! We’re going to have to make a house call instead! If you’re hungry, these people are all yours!”

Nobody saw the big grin that appeared on the dragon’s face as she snapped up her first human, snapping the man in half and letting the blood drip down her throat before using her lizard like tongue to dislodge the body from her teeth and downing the rest of him.

“ Once a vampire, always a vampire.” Hermione commented. “Shame about Vernon, but we’re going to need to bring this place down.”

“Yeah, I suppose that will be mildly satisfying, but hardly therapeutic. Let Knight and Pettigrew handle it, we’ll take the werewolves and go to privet drive.” Harry replied. “Though, I was hoping to avoid going there.” He instinctively flexed his hand as he thought about the last time he had been there with his bandaged hand.

“I’m sure that either the Order or Voldemort’s crew will be around in a bit, especially after the place has been levelled.”

Hermione nodded and disappeared.

Harry moved to where the other rogues had everyone surrounded at wand-point. “Fenrir, we’re changing target. We haven’t planned it, but it shouldn’t be a problem. Have everyone meet me outside.”

Fenrir grinned and everyone moved. “Knight, Wormtail. This place is a breeding ground for trouble. I want this place in flames.”

They both nodded.

“Then I’ll see you back at the Void.”

A few moments later, everyone left was set surrounding the block of land that was Privet drive, he noticed that the car was full of suitcases and that the boot was tied down with bungy cords.

Hermione held his hand as they both looked on amused. “He’s skipping town.”

“I think that’s rather obvious my love.” His wife replied. “I won’t let them get away though, they’re your birthday present after all, and after all the horrible things they did to you, even I would like to work off some steam on them.”

A grumbling Vernon came through the open door with a TV hiding his face and waddling to the car with it like a penguin.

“Lend the fellow a hand would you darling? The poor man can barely see where he’s going.” She said loudly and then whispered in

his ear. "Go on love, you need this." She gave him a gentle shove. 'He needs this...' she told herself as if to reassure herself.

Harry shook his head and chuckled silently. He strode across the grass to the car and said "Here, let me get the door for you."

"Ah, thanks." Vernon placed the TV in the car.

"Where you headed?"

"Thought we'd head off to France." Vernon replied from inside the car.

"Don't like your chances." Harry replied. "Those freaks have the tunnel blocked off."

"I've got a gun that should convince them to..." Vernon was now out of the car and staring directly at a decisively taller man than the one he had beat to a pulp not long before he had left. His eyes flickered over to the brunette in the deep green robe on her pavement.

"Won't work. Their shields will hold against a few bullets, though you're welcome to try if you even make it that far."

Harry gestured inside the house as he shut the car door.

Dursley looked at his hand suspiciously.

"What?"

"You've got more stuff to get don't you? Besides, I'd like to have a cup of tea with you all before you go."

Vernon slowly nodded and moved back to the house. "Petunia! Put some tea on!"

"WHAT!? I just packed the crockery!"

“Coming Hermione?”

“Of course.” She replied with a grin, she had hoped that it would come to this. She had spent a while researching curses specifically for this occasion. “I will ask you though to tone things down a bit tonight, my constitution isn’t what it used to be,” She placed her hand on her stomach to emphasise the point.

“I can’t promise that.” Harry said with a frown as he looked at the house. “But you can leave whenever you wish, the werewolves will keep you safe.”

She nodded in acceptance.

“Will you all be alright?” She asked the disillusioned werewolves behind them.

“We’ll be fine my lady,” They replied.

So with their approval, the Barons moved into the house.

The house hadn’t changed recently.

“This feels rather nostalgic.” Harry remarked as he moved into the kitchen where his aunt was unpacking a few cups.

She dropped the cup she was holding when she heard the voice and turned, startled.

She stumbled with her speech as the speech centre of her brain caught up with the logic processing part.

“It’s nice to see I’m not the only one who breaks cups and plates in this place.” Harry mused.

Hermione did her part at being civil and repaired the cup, making Petunia wince as the cup flew back into her hand.

“So, you came crawling back did you?” Vernon asked as he came from his office, obviously hiding something behind his back.

“Do I look like I’m on my hands and knees to you?” Harry asked, mildly amused. “What’s that behind your back?” He asked. “Knowing you, it’s not a birthday present. Accio.”

An envelope flew out of Vernon’s hands and into Harry. This alone surprised Harry as he’d been expecting a knife or that gun Vernon had been talking about.

Hermione raised an eyebrow in question as Harry opened it and pulled out the letter on the inside.

He opened up the letter and got as far as “Dear Mr Potter.” Before he felt a familiar tug on his navel.

In a panic, Harry called upon his magic for an incendio and the portkey combusted in his hands before it has the chance to fully activate. The flames roared intensely in his hands, causing him to drop the letter rather quickly and inspect his hand.

“Harry!” Hermione called, summoning a shield in front of him as a gunshot rang in the house. A ricochet sounded and Vernon screamed.

“Expelliarmus!” The gun flew from Petunia’s hands.

Even without the shield, Petunia would not have hit Harry, but his not leaving had been a complete surprise and by shielding Harry, Hermione had unknowingly protected herself from being shot.

Not that either of them realised that.

“Watch Petunia.” Harry commanded his wife as he approached Vernon. “So who put you up to this? Dumbledore or Voldemort?” When Vernon didn’t respond, Harry summoned the bullet from the wound.

“F-Fuck you!” Vernon yelled at him.

Harry drew his sword and gently poked the bullet wound with it.

Vernon screamed again, but even when Harry pulled the weapon out, he refused to answer. So he slid it in a little further.

“Stop it!” His aunt called. “It-It was Dumbledore.”

“Did you notify the Order?” Harry asked. Vernon nodded.

“We should probably hurry then.” Hermione commented.

Harry nodded, mildly annoyed. “My birthday present was your lives. I’m going to kill you both for what you did to me over the years. I was thinking about turning Dudley into a boar and forcing you both to eat him, but seeing as he isn’t here, we’ll just have to improvise.”

“Harry!” Hermione scolded. “Eating their own son! I told you I have a weak stomach!”

Harry looked abashed, but did not apologise, instead, he glanced at his aunt and offered her to Hermione to do with as she pleased.

Hermione gave a feral grin and made Harry promise that under no circumstances should he look in this direction, which he freely gave.

Harry towered above Vernon who was still lying on the floor, panting, and stabbed his sword into Vernon’s hand. Vernon screamed and rolled over to grasp his hand.

“Hurts doesn’t it?” Harry asked as he pushed the blade into Vernon’s shoulder this time, forcing him back to the floor and letting his voice drown out the cries of his aunt whom Hermione held at wand-point.

“But I’ll bet you never understood what pain was, even when you were inflicting it on me.” Harry left his sword where it was, embedded in his arm and stapling him to the floor and stepped backwards towards Hermione. “Crucio!”

When he finally lifted the spell from his uncle, he gave him a dehydration curse, causing him to sweat profusely, and the blood in his wounds seemed to evaporate out of his wounds in small clouds of red.

Meanwhile, Hermione had petrified Petunia and slipped her a potion from a vial she had prepared earlier and been chanting a long series of incantations, the first of which had Petunia drooling and looking nowhere in particular.

Hermione had transfigured a plastic pear on the table into a set of shaded glasses that she couldn't even see through.

Now, Harry's aunt's hair was falling out of her head and the skin on her head started writhing.

The Last Dark Lord looked on in satisfaction as Vernon became emaciated. Pulling a vial out of his pocket which he'd brought for the occasion, he held it above Vernon. "Thirsty? I'll let you have this."

Vernon, in a sane state of mind would have definitely say no, but his need for water far outweighed any logic in his mind. So much so that he snatched the vile from Harry's hands and downed it, completely ignoring the pain from his bad shoulder.

Still, the clear liquid was hardly enough to satisfy his thirst and in fact, burnt his throat even as it went down and started liquefying his innards.

Harry smiled in satisfaction. He was good as dead now. A bezoar would not cure this particular poison which had been stolen from Voldemort's stashes in one raid.

"I'm done Harry." Hermione said as she released his aunt from the petrification.

"What have you done to me!?" Petunia hissed snakily.

Harry turned to look but Hermione yelled. "DON'T LOOK!" She pushed him towards the door.

"She's still alive." Harry commented.

"I turned her into a trap for the order." Hermione said smugly. "Now let's go before they arrive. They've been slow to arrive already."

They stepped out of the door and Harry mentally thought to himself that they were getting what they deserved. Perhaps they were once nice people before they'd been obliviated, but all Harry felt for them was hate and contempt. They were getting what they deserved.

And with a soft pop, left to enjoy the last two hours of his birthday with his wife in a completely different fashion.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Sixteen people appeared on the scene literally two minutes after the attacking force left.

"Shit." A young man, Graham cursed as he looked over at the car. "Where the hell did he think he was going?"

As they approached the house, they heard crying from the inside.

"The house, team." Charlie Weasley called as he signalled them to approach the house. "Let's focus. Harry is here somewhere."

The team of Order members surrounded the house and a minute later, they all broke into the house simultaneously.

The house was silent apart from the sound of crying from somewhere.

The team broke into a downstairs and an upstairs team.

The downstairs team was shocked to find Vernon Dursley, barely alive in the kitchen.

His chest barely moving and his mouth frothing as he spasmed. His nervous system incorrectly transmitting signals down his nerves making him twitch regularly.

“He’s too far gone. There’s next to nothing left to repair.” The team medic replied. “I can’t save him.”

Upstairs was a different story. That’s where the sobbing had come from.

Iggy, as his team mates called him, jumped into Dudley’s room, finding nothing.

The next member, Graham reached the master bedroom of the house and found a woman staring at her Mirror.

“Ma’am, Are you alright? Are you hurt anywhere?”

“Please help me!” She said, turning her tear stained face to him, showing a bundle of hair made of snakes.

He jumped back in surprise and shouted. His shout was cut short after his face turned a pasty grey and his eyes glazed over.

Petunia Dursley screamed at the stone statue where a man had once been.

“Graham! Are you alright!” Two more men jumped into the room and caught sight of the Dursley Matriarch’s face, before knowing no more.

Petunia pushed past the statues and ran downstairs where everybody else was gathering at the noise.

Nobody left the house that night except Petunia Dursley who ran into the night, screaming.

.o’OoOoO’o.

When the happy couple woke up in the morning, they both felt like a weight had been lifted off their shoulders.

Harry had of course hoped that Dudley had been home, but he had not. Presumably he was off terrorising the neighbourhood still.

If all went well, he'd catch up with the fat whale later.

It had been a good day yesterday and today was shaping up to be just as good when Fenrir met with him in the morning and said that many of the werewolves were happy to help him out with the attack on Hogwarts. It was a huge weight taken from his shoulders.

Many had offered to stay behind to do support.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Hermione had eventually come across a theory of what had happened on the day that her ritual with Harry had completed. It had been plaguing her thoughts ever since it had occurred.

There were only a few inconsistencies with her theory, but it was something to start with. There was the fact that not one of the ones involved in the accident disliked the change, not one of them had complained. So it was her preliminary theory that the flow of magic had granted them whatever they had wished they could change about themselves.

Cynwise had said that she wouldn't give up being a vampire, and Minerva had on a few occasions complained that she was getting too old to be of use to them.

Knight's change was less obvious as to what it was that he wanted for himself. Hermione doubted that what he really wanted for himself deep down was to be a muscle man.

The biggest inconsistency in her theory was Luna, surely nobody could possibly really wish for themselves that they were a dragon completely incapable of camouflaging into anything except an innocuous life size doll's house!

Yet on that note, if there was anybody that would wish that for themselves, it would be her. 'That girl's brain was assembled horribly wrong.' She mused to herself.

Then there was the fact that in the mind world magic was completely corrosive whereas in the real world, it had just done weird, unpredictable things to everyone that had been immersed in it.

That in itself wasn't really a surprise at all given that in the mind world, they were hardly physical bodies, despite how it seemed at the time. It just meant that pure magic was probably corrosive to the spirit when applied directly.

Her studies into the events that transpired had her quite mad at the Sorting Hat which had once again completely downplayed any danger at all.

As the two of them had taken more and more of the potion, it brought the two mind worlds closer in sync with each other until Harry and Hermione were perfectly synchronised for a couple of weeks. At that point, the only thing holding them together long enough to conceive their child was the essence of both Ron and Draco. Killing the two of them was completely unnecessary, but it was the lightning that was the result of the conception of their child that tore down the wall and gave free access to the river of magic that flowed behind the wall.

If they had been killed before the child had conceived, the wall would not have cracked.

It was the white phoenix that had told her that the amount of magic present was unnatural and that the sea of magic in their mind-worlds was being converted from their love for each other, love being an unlimited resource.

Except that it wasn't an unlimited resource. If their love should fail and dwindle away, they would use up their magic and end up as squibs.

The fact that Harry could pull so much magic from the mind world at once made her think that if he could master the use of such a large

pool of magic, that he would be truly unstoppable. But even to date, his use of magic was clumsy at best. He was very good at destroying buildings, but there was no way that Harry could selectively kill people while keeping hostages and allies alive, for that he tended to use his sword.

She had still not been able to figure out why exactly it was that Harry was so much stronger than herself. Sometimes it seemed hardly fair, but watching Harry stun one of the chairs and having it go completely limp that it made a better cushion than a chair, she didn't seem to mind that much.

Events like that were quickly making Harry even shorter tempered than she was at times.

Still, when Hermione realised that without the love between her and her husband she would be incapable of doing anything more than lecturing someone to death. The key then to their downfall would be in someone giving them another love potion.

For that realisation, she actually thanked Albus Dumbledore. Without his interference, she probably wouldn't have come up with the theory in the first place.

Once the realisation was made, she resolved that nobody could find out about this except Harry. Not even any of the other Rogues. If he truly was the last dark lord, and they all knew for a fact that he was. Allowing that information to escape would just be setting them up for a fall.

These thoughts skimmed through Hermione's mind as she continued working lazily on her modifications of the Doppelganger charm.

While not a complex charm when broken down into arithmantic formulae, illusions being one of the first kinds of spell that students created in arithmancy, these ones needed an intelligence of their own. Parts of which taken from the imperio curse. They needed to be completely tangible, borrowing from advanced conjuration.

Putting it all together however was not easy. The simple charm had become a monster that was closer to conjuration than its original counterpart and she was seriously thinking about other avenues answers however were not forthcoming due to the catastrophic failures that were being produced.

She sighed and leaned back on her chair, glancing at the calendar on the wall and a clipping of the article about her parents stuck next to it.

Her stomach growled at her neglect, causing Aelred to give a curious hoot like noise.

She glanced down and smiled. "HARRY!" She bellowed. "Could you please get me a glass of milk and some cookies?"

Harry who was practicing swords stances didn't stop to reply to her but did move back to moves he was more familiar with so he wouldn't need to concentrate as much.

"What? That's an easy one! Why don't you get Dobby to get it for you?" He whinged back.

"Two reasons darling," She called back. "You were the one who did this to me, so you can at least play the father and support your family! The other thing, is that Dobby has been conjuring food."

"So?" Came the disembodied voice. "Food is food."

"Harold James, whatever possessed you to think that conjured food was nutri..." She went silent for a second and two words ran through her head. Possessed, and conjured.

"Sweety?" Harry called tentatively.

"MILK AND BISCUITS HARRY! NOW! And then you can come over here and spend some time with me!"

"Alright, alright... I'm going..." Harry said dejectedly and stepped outside so he wouldn't ruin his training hall.

Knowing better than to screw up hard work that she may yet need to return to, she rolled up her current work and stood it on its end along with the seventeen other scrolls of notes she'd created working on this spell.

Before Harry delivered the food raided from the werewolves' storage facility, he took the opportunity to speak to his resident cook about his methods of creating the food. Dobby took it as expected and broke down crying and started punishing himself when he thought he'd done something wrong.

Once it was under control and he'd promised to only use real food from now on, Harry brought the milk and cookies to his wife and explained that the issue was taken care of.

"You just wanted to have an excuse to not get me stuff." She pouted.

"Just in the event that I'm in the middle of something really important and can't do it for you."

"You mean the baby and I aren't the most important thing to you!?" She said angrily.

Knight chose that moment to enter the study, saw the colour of Hermione's aura and gave a distinct "Uh oh," Before leaving again.

"That's not what I meant." Harry grumbled. "I meant if I'm at a meeting where you can't get in contact with me. You can depend on me to do anything if I'm contactable and not fighting or something."

She seemed mildly placated at that and Harry silently thanked his wit for dodging that bullet. Now came the next phase of letting her mood swing back. "What was it you wanted to speak to me about?"

"Oh!" She grinned happily. "I had an idea on the doppelgangers. I think we need to possess some conjured duplicates of ourselves."

“That kind of requires that a conjuration has a mind to begin with doesn’t it?”

“Well, yes, but I believe that a modified conjuration-transfiguration of a mouse should do it well enough. We’ll use the mouse brain in the conjuration for the possessed brain.”

Harry frowned. The idea was sound but... “Are you sure we have enough time to get such a thing working?”

“Trust me my beloved. I’ll do it.”

Harry kissed her forehead. “If anybody can, it’s you.”

She beamed with pride.
.o’OoOoO’o.

As August passed, everybody worked themselves into a sweat, training. Those who were not participating in the battle were being trained by the healers basic triage and first aid.

Remus could be found continually checking over the fourteen cauldrons filled with almost complete Wolfsbane potion, four others ensuring that nothing happened to the potions that they all depended upon.

Knight could be found lording over the werewolves as they engaged in mock hand-to-hand combat battles and sword fighting while he wasn’t working personally with Minerva to bring up her skills as a duellist.

It was obvious to the rogues that something was growing between the two of them, small blushes here and there, an odd invitation to read together.

Then they heard Knight start calling her ‘Minnie’. The others didn’t know whether to tease them or to let them grow their own relationship. A small meeting deciding on the latter after Hermione vetoed the idea of moving McGonagall’s bed into Knight’s abode.

It was a welcome event though. It gave Minerva a dedication they hadn't seen since she was teaching at school.

Cynwise, though she still spent a lot of time playing with the kids, started spending more and more time with the rogues. Her contributions were not always helpful, like the time she suggested that Harry and Dumbledore play tag on a minefield or that Hermione could distract him by transfiguring his robes into a tutu. But they did give a few 'hmmm' moments.

Luna on the other hand was conscripted by Phillip Bastion the smith to heat metal as he made crude swords that were functional, but he had a far way to go before they were truly effective. For now they did an interesting job of both cutting and bludgeoning at the same time. Some most of the cutting blade was very sharp, but other sections of the blade were dull and round, making those parts more club like than a blade. Either way, they looked pretty menacing and Harry was happy to have someone making use of the bits of metal they'd found while digging the caves.

Harry had offered to teach the smith a few hexes that would do the trick nicely, but Phillip grimly told him that he was a muggle before he became a vampire, so Harry offered to get him whatever he needed to improve.

When Luna wasn't doing playing pink furnace, she'd be hunting animals on the mountain range. At night time, she demonstrated her ability to apparate the way Cynwise did still and would come home with food for the werewolves and shiny trinkets to fill her cave with.

Peter Pettigrew spent a lot of time gathering intelligence, mostly on the Dark Lord Voldemort's plans and confirmed that he too was planning for a major battle, but the pawns didn't know the target. He was unable to report one way or the other if Voldemort was planning on using the chance to attack whoever was left at the end, but evidence suggested he had another target in mind.

He was also able to discern that there was little to suggest that the Order of the Phoenix would be participating in the upcoming battle as

Dumbledore had them guarding other key facilities such as the replacement hospital and the Ministry of Magic.

Harry had spent all of his spare time in meditation and practise training in order to control his magic. He was still unable to use magic at a normal level, but he at least got it to about what it used to be at maximum before the ritual.

Hermione was doing what she did best. Research, when she wasn't throwing up. Her morning sickness had started to worsen in the last couple of weeks of August. But she still managed to pull through, four days before the battle was to take place but she had managed to completely out-do herself in crafting the spell which was a mini-ritual in its own right.

She and Harry both practised it until they had it perfect that they could create a single doppelganger. It had all the properties they normally had except that their auras were visible even to the couple which gave them something to be truly amazed about as they hadn't ever seen them before since they'd become more expressive.

Hermione had warned him though that because the spell was possession, it would be like having four eyes and was quite disorienting if you didn't close your real eyes before manipulating the doppelganger which was as simple as wishing it to do something.

She was sure that with time she could have perfectly duplicated Bellatrix' spell, but for now this spell would suffice.

The two phoenixes were now stringing together complex sentences and holding conversations with their chosen.

It was fascinating that each of them distinctly remembered Fawkes, but only as their origin, nothing more but they did understand the circumstances under which they were created and strangely enough didn't seem to hold it against them and instead insisted that it was how it was supposed to be.

Wilheard's temperament in particular only seemed to get worse with age and even though each of them now looked like proper phoenixes

there were a number of traits that were most definitely wrong. Wilheard's song caused people to cower in fear for example and was unable to lift heavy items. Whereas Aelred was incapable of fire-travel but at least his song lifted people's spirits. They once sang a duet which almost caused a riot from the confusion they caused.

The last preparations were made on August 31st. The werewolves were distributed straps with which they could strap swords to their backs in such a way they wouldn't lose them in the transformation and every single one of the fighters were given a flagon of wolfsbane.

Each of the straps were charmed by Harry and Hermione to be portkeys so that they could return as needed if everything fell apart or if Voldemort decided to show up.

The healers and the trainees all prepared spare beds and extra guards were assigned to the prison cells.

Lastly, everyone was reminded of the rules of evacuation if The Void was Voldemort's target. It was doubtful, but they had to have these rules in place.

At 6 pm on that last day, Harry once again found himself upon the tree stump addressing the werewolves with Wilheard on his shoulder, Hermione standing with Aelred against the tree.

"Everyone, Thanks for coming. Tonight, will be the last night you sleep with three Dark Lords looming over you. Tomorrow, marks the beginning of my war it is the night that I officially rise as the Last Dark Lord. Tomorrow I shall shed the name Baron Black and I wish for you all to acknowledge that the cruel and heartless Baron is dead.

"In his place, you will find the person who will calm the world and bring unity to all. You will find me cruel to those who displease me without justification. You will find me defiant against all who would oppress others in the name of pathetic narrow-minded ideals. I will be ruthless in my battles yet I shall be merciful to those who deserve it.

“It has been a concept that even I have found difficult to accept, yet the prophecy seems to have moulded itself around me instead.

“Every single one of you. You have offered your services to me as my warriors, my defenders, my healers, my keepers, my feeders, my planners. Every one of you has a place in my world and I shall make sure that all of you get the recognition, the freedom and the acceptance each and every one of you deserve. It will take time, but it will happen, trust me on that.

“I feel, that tomorrow will go off without a hitch. It is my desire and hope that every single one of you comes back unharmed tomorrow and it is not an unreasonable hope.

“Tonight, I wish for you all to spend the night doing whatever it is you want to do. Relax, spend time with your loved ones and enjoy life for what it is. Tomorrow, at 4 pm, when my flare lights up the sky, each and every one of you participating in the battle is to assemble here. Everybody else is to go to their designated stations. You have my thanks.”

A cheer rose through the crowd and both Wilheard and Aelred leapt off their partner's shoulders to fly around the group, Wilheard allowing Aelred to sing alone for this occasion. It was their first flight, adding to the moment.

A few werewolves cleared the centre of the gathering and started gathering wood at the centre lighting a bonfire as tall as the trees.

A couple even apparated home to pick up some instruments and together, started playing music turning the evening into a real party. Even the Lady and Lord of the evening joined in dancing, if you can call bouncing to the beat 'dancing'.

Some of the werewolves would approach them at various times during the night and hand the Lords envelopes, containing wills. It was an uneasy thing to accept but they would do that.

Many of the werewolves had become friends of varying degrees to each of them and Harry dearly hoped that he would not have to read any of them out any time soon.

After a few hours, The Potters took their absence to go back to their cave, where they allowed each other to become amorous with one another once more and they made love as if were their last time together.

When they finally relaxed in each other's arms Harry finally allowed himself a moment of weakness to tell his lover that he was scared. He was worried that it was all a mistake and that he was going to get pasted the moment he convinced Dumbledore to stop playing games.

Hermione kissed his head and told him that she'd reintroduce her parents to him the following night then stroked his hair until he fell asleep and herself soon afterwards.

Almost everybody in The Void slept in the following morning, with the exception of the smith who was still working on new swords for a few last people.

Everybody else was checking their equipment and having last minute spars with one another.

As the time before the attack counted down, Harry finally moved to put on his armour and allowed himself a joke at Hermione's expense that she should put on her wedding dress.

She stuck her tongue out at him and placed her arms in her dragonhide armour, a belated wedding gift from Knight, McGonagall and Remus.

It certainly looked a darned sight better than the dementor cloaks. Harry admitted as he appraised her body.

Hermione handed her a cage with two mice in them and they double checked their portkeys.

With those details taken care of, they each turned to their phoenixes waiting on the tables and told them to stay.

“I will wait for you.” Hermione’s bird replied.

Wilheard on the other hand screeched. “Am I not good enough for you?”

“Wait until you get a bit bigger fella. I don’t want Dumbledore getting wind of what happened to Fawkes.”

“Hmph.” The bird replied. “I will stay as long as I know you will not be in danger.” The bird decided. “and I demand you bring back some treats for me.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “I’ll see what I can do.” Was his reply as if he barely intended to even look.

Hermione took Harry by the arm. “It’s four o’clock love.”

Harry nodded and lead her outside before pointing his wand skyward and shooting the flare which illuminated the whole area.
.o’OoOoO’o.

They had timed the whole event that they wouldn’t appear in Hogwarts until after the first years had gotten out of the boats, ensuring that all the staff were inside the building.

The entire cohort apparated one by one to the outskirts of Hogsmeade, carefully trying to avoid notice and started a procession up to Hogwarts gates. Every person there passed inside and stopped, aligning themselves with the walls and forming a line towards the forbidden forest with the exception of the rogues who each stood ahead of them.

The only one not present was Luna who had gone to the cave Sirius had once lived in.

With a nod, Harry shook hands with Fenrir and wished them luck and safety before leading the Rogues to the courtyard.

When they arrived at their designated places, Harry and Hermione each got out their cages and each started the complex spells to create their doppelgangers.

A mould of flesh appeared and hovered in the air and Harry grabbed one of the mice and stuffed it in the putty like flesh before moving onto another chant, which after a few moments took on a human appearance and with a modified doppelganger charm, applied his own appearance to the mould, giving a splitting image of himself. The last thing he needed to do, was to possess the doll.

As he cast the curse on the doll, he was once more assaulted by the dual vision phenomenon and closed his real eyes and turned to Hermione. After she had finished her own possession a moment later, he made his doppelganger kiss her real body on the cheek and the both of them approached the doors of Hogwarts Castle.

“Here we go.”
.o'OoOoO'o.

Dumbledore had not been surprised at Harry's absence from the train. But the sorting had finished, food had been served and the night had been wearing on. It would cause problems if they did not come on this night. Some of his allies in the forbidden forest would give him trouble if he had them standing guard all night for an event that never occurred.

Even as it was, he was unhappy with having to actually play his trump card like this, but the issue of the Barons Black had deteriorated to the point where using Hermione's parents as bait to draw them in, and while it seemed that it was ultimately designed to draw Miss Granger to the school, it was more so designed in such a way to plant certain thoughts in Potter's head.

Thoughts that he would nurture. It was certain that it was no longer an option of breaking them up. His sources had overheard vampires

talking about their wedding, but it was perhaps a possibility of having someone look like her after she was disposed of this night.

Then it was just a matter of keeping Harry's rage to a simmer until he was ready to dispose of Voldemort. Dumbledore would personally oversee his training to ensure that his skills were at a level that could stave off Voldemort in a battle until the power that he knows not appeared.

He knew that it would be love. The one thing that Voldemort was incapable of feeling and a powerful tool in and of itself.

He shivered in his seat. It felt unnaturally cold in here all of a sudden.

He was brought out of his conversation with Professor Vector as he looked towards the door of the great hall where a tendril of black smoke came from under the door. Dumbledore sighed with relief.

"Hagrid, would you be so kind as to barricade the doors. It seems we have a fire in the main hall."

As Hagrid stomped down the hallway, Dumbledore gave a wry grin. He had figured that he'd need to beat the boy into submission. He wished there was another way, but now all he could do was see what the young man thought he was doing by setting his castle alight; especially when the place was filled with magically adept children who could easily put out the fires themselves.

Having said that, he mused, perhaps miss Granger had come up with waterproof flames. That would be a more interesting challenge.

Under a bubblehead charm on the other side of the door, Harry nodded to his other half who nodded back.

Hagrid moved to reach for the bar that would barricade the doors. When they both flew inwards, the heavy doors crushing a few seventh year students from Hufflepuff under one door and injuring Hagrid under the other.

Despite the smoke pouring into the room, nobody could see the flames as an enormous black aura visible to everyone present crept into the room like snooping house elves.

As they stepped forward, a layer of sleet formed in front of them, only to be melted before their feet touched the ground and everybody caught within their aura could feel the hate radiating off of them.

Dumbledore's eyes were like a pair of saucers. The raw power rolling off of the couple gave him the chills, how could either of them have possibly have achieved so much power in so little time. The idea that it was achievable made him certain that it was little more than a spectacle. With that in mind, it was rather impressive to fool even him.

"Harry my boy. You missed the train. I'm glad you could join us."

Harry locked eyes with the old wizard and with Hermione on one arm moved forward, the smell of the food almost drawing his mind off of what he was here to do. He had almost forgotten how good it all smelt.

Hermione too looked around and saw food. However, for her, something didn't quite agree with her and the overwhelming amount of cucumber that assaulted her nose made her stomach roil and the next thing she knew, she was throwing up all over some hapless third-year Gryffindor.

Harry rolled his eyes, his black aura fading to a concerned puce.

"Are you alright?" He said quietly to her.

"I'm fine..." She growled as she straightened herself, wandlessly cleaned her face and dress and mustered her dignity. Taking a deep breath, she allowed her eyes to wander across the teacher's tables to where her father sat in what was traditionally the seat of the Defence against the Dark Arts chair and her Mother in the place where McGonagall typically sat.

“Hiring muggles to teach advanced subjects?” Harry asked Dumbledore. “Are you sure they have the right qualifications?”

“They met the qualifications I outlined for them.” Dumbledore replied. “That is enough.”

“We’ll be taking them back if you don’t mind.” Hermione said looking back at him.

“Are these the two criminals you spoke of Dumbledore?” Hermione’s mother asked.

Hermione’s heart fell. “You didn’t. Mum... It’s me.” She dared him to tell her that he had obliviated her parents.

He gave a serene smile that did not deny it.

“Are you planning on starting a fight here Harry?”

“We are here to take your life Albus Dumbledore.” Harry told him and readied his wand.

The hairs standing on the back of his neck warned him of a spell coming from behind. His best guess was that it came from the Gryffindor table, yet he did nothing to stop it.

The spell went straight through his chest and he disappeared in a fog of clouds, along with Hermione and left a disembodied voice that was laughing. “Come and get us Dumbledore, we’re in the courtyard.”

The old man frowned and cast a privacy charm around himself and the other teachers. “It would seem that Mister Potter wants to duel with me, but we must take him alive. The girl is optional. I would like Professors Vector, Trelawney, Hagrid and Mr Granger to take the east exit, Mrs Granger, Flitwick, Snape and Babbling to take the west exit and come around, Pomona, Sinistra will follow me to the courtyard.”

“Do you really expect us to fight Albus?” Emma Granger asked with concern laced in her voice.

He dispelled the privacy ward and quietened the chattering students.

“Prefects, please take your charges and stay in your dorms until I say it is safe to come out.” His eyes moved to the Gryffindor table. “Miss Weasley, please come with me.”

As everybody moved as directed, Snape took the opportunity to place his wand against his Dark Mark.
.o'OoOoO'o.

“How did it go?” Minerva asked as both Harry and Hermione waited for the disorientation to clear.

“Well enough.” Harry told her. “They’ll be here shortly I’d imagine.”

Remus opened up a familiar piece of paper. “I solemnly swear I’m up to no good. Though... I’m not sure that’s really apt, given the circumstances.”

The lines etched themselves on the paper after a moment and they were able to see a mass of names moving towards the dormitories and an almost predictable list moving towards the exits.

“Ginevra Weasley?” Remus asked. “She’s accompanying the headmaster...”

“Oh?” Harry asked with a lifted eyebrow. “Wonder what he’s hoping to achieve with that...” It was but another variable to be dealt with.

“How are we running? Is everything ready?”

“Like clockwork master.”

“Excellent.” Harry felt his heart beating in nervousness. How would this battle go? Who would live, who would die?

Hermione put her hands in his and he realised she was feeling the same and suddenly the nervousness stopped. He knew who would live and survive. He and Hermione both would live with their baby. He could not afford to lose.

“I won’t lose. Otherwise I’d be wrong in accepting the responsibility I have.” He told her.

They spent a few more moments in silence waiting for the welcoming party. A few moments later, Dumbledore appeared with his team alongside him. Harry grinned in anticipation.

“I was afraid you weren’t going to come.”

“Come now Harry, aren’t you a bit young to be playing these games?”

“You’d be surprised how much a child can grow up in a year. But the games I play are none of your concern. I came here to challenge you to a duel.”

Dumbledore chuckled to himself. “My dear boy, it has been but a few months since you challenged me last. My skills have not deteriorated since then. It would be far better for you to surrender yourself to me now or you may get hurt.”

Harry shook his head.

“Well then.” Dumbledore reached into his robes and called out. “I announce a private duel between Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore!” He pulled out of his robes a glowing ball and threw it into the air.

It was more reaction than anything else that Harry fired a reducto at it, but before it even reached the ball a blinding light enveloped him and he reflexively closed his eyes.

When he opened them, he found himself alone on a field under a bright blue sky. A soft wind blew across the field, causing the grass to shift.

Harry frowned. Wherever he was, it wasn't anywhere near Hermione and that threw a small spanner in the works.

He was confident that the both of them would be able to bring him down by giving him two targets to worry about. Forget the moral ideals of duels being one-on-one; he just wanted the old man dead.

With a thought, Harry tried apparating out, only to find that the sensation didn't even occur, let alone the bouncing that occurred with an anti-apparation ward. Reaching into his armour, he tried his portkey only to find that it too wouldn't activate.

"Dante's duelling sphere." Dumbledore's voice rang from in front of him. "An infinite space created specifically for duels to be uninterrupted the duration of the sphere will last until one or the other is fully incapacitated or dead, however the use of an unforgivable in here would cause the sphere to take your life."

Harry stared at Dumbledore, roughly the space of a Quidditch pitch away from him. Despite the fact that his voice sounded as if he'd been talking over his shoulder.

"Sounds good." Harry replied, trying to sound like it had been his plan all along.

He drew his sword and readied his wand and wondered if he should attempt to give the old man the impression that nothing had changed or if he should just go all out on him.

The Baron shook his head. There was no need to show all his cards at once.

"Take your place you old goat, I'm sure we both have a few surprises for each other." He said and started stepping towards said old goat.

Dumbledore patted his robes, ensuring that a pouch was still there and safe. He would need it shortly.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Hermione meanwhile was pissed. Before she could do anything, Harry had disappeared with naught a trace. Dumbledore had stayed for long enough to mention a few words to Ginny before Hermione unleashed a barrage of lethal spells at the old man who deftly blocked them all before stepping forward and disappearing.

“Lady Potter?” An unvoiced question in McGonagall’s face.

“Harry will be back shortly.” She told herself. “In the meantime, the plan doesn’t change much except that I’m not with Harry this time. We take back my parents.”

The others nodded and stepped forwards, wands at the ready.

The teaching faculty looked surprised that this was happening and Vector, Trelawney and Hermione’s mother fell to stunners before any of them had a chance to even respond.

The first person to get off a spell however was in fact Daniel Granger, fired directly at Cynwise who dodged the spell awkwardly.

Immediately after that, Ginny fired a cutting curse at Hermione which she only partially blocked and copped a nick to her left forearm.

Hermione looked on in surprise. Her father using spells and Ginny firing off such powerful spells. She reigned in her surprise. Dumbledore’s lies ran deeper than she knew. Her parents weren’t squibs at all and Ginny had performed at the very least the same ritual Harry and She had done the first time. She would have heard from either Ronald or Dumbledore.

“Select your targets and attack.” Hermione called as she picked whom she felt was most dangerous. The other teachers seemed well

enough, but it seemed rather appropriate that the two star-crossed should battle.

Knight picked his target and moved straight for Flitwick, both accomplished duellists. Despite the high challenged charms teacher's experience, a lack of use and ever increasing age levelled the playfield against a very active ex-deatheater.

Remus had been chosen to go against Snape if he was present, mainly because a duel with Severus was as much a battle of wits as duelling prowess and nobody present had more dirt on Severus than Remus, though it would be the first time Snape had heard any of it coming from him.

Minerva aimed directly at Pomona Sprout and transfigured the stone beneath her into chains as Professor Vector fired back at her

Cynwise was not expecting to be fighting Sinistra and Hermione's father. While the Dark Lady was not her chosen master she had enough power and wit to make her life very uncomfortable if she accidentally killed him.

Unfortunately for her, Dan Granger was the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher and knew exactly what Vampires hated. She dodged a concentrated sunlight spell and as she saw Rubeus Hagrid approaching her, bellowed at the top of her voice "LUNA!"

She dodged another volley of spells before the Pink Dragon appeared from the mountains.

"Well, I'll be blowed." Hagrid said in amazement as a stunner hit him, causing him to shudder. His eyes firmly held onto the Dragon.

Hermione watched long enough to ensure that the battle was under way. She noted with some pride that the teachers were, for the most part, completely untrained and unprepared for this battle and there had been no call to the forbidden forest for allies. It truly seemed that in Dumbledore's opinion it was to be a showdown between Harry and himself, but it was obvious to her that the old man had completely misunderstood their capabilities and intentions.

“What were you hoping to achieve?” Hermione asked the younger Weasley.

“Dumbledore has a ring of Slavery he’ll be putting on Harry once the fool has been beaten into submission. After that, I’ll be the one to bring out the power Voldemort knows not.”

The brunette laughed at her naivety. “You presume that Harry will lose to Dumbledore, but I know for a fact that as long as Harry loves me, he cannot lose. But just in case, I think I’d like to take you out of the equation, after all, only one of us has ever been required to bring forth the Last Dark Lord.

“Come then, you’re about to learn that power rituals mean nothing without the skills to use that power.” Hermione taunted as she readied her legs to move as needed.

Hermione stayed purely on the defensive, learning her opponent’s preferences and skills. She had not been wrong in her assumptions. Ginny was a powerful witch as she was, but she had naught but a fifth-year Defence class and under a year of DA training with which to use her spells, plus perhaps a week of duelling training Hermione decided as she shielded against a distinct blood boiling curse.

She did have to give her one thing however, she was fast and her spells were shattering every protego she put up and as she deflected a reducto as thought ran through her mind. “When I get home tonight, I want pasta. Yeah, pasta.”
.o’OoOoO’o.

No life larger than an insect existed on the plain and most were undisturbed until a shot of red or blue sailed overhead, then instinct demanded that they flee.

It seemed completely unreasonable that two wizards would be fighting each other in such a peaceful place, undisturbed since Dumbledore had fought Grindelwald in this exact same place.

Up until this moment, both of the wizards had been toying with each other. Dumbledore was convinced that Harry's aura was nothing more than an illusion that had yet to wear itself off, and the level of magic that Harry was throwing at him was consistent with that assumption.

As such, there was no need to go all out against him.

Still, Dumbledore saw not the need to drag this out too long. He had children to organise, the death of Hermione Granger to organise and a meeting with the wizengamot to get to.

Shielding against another pathetic reducto, Dumbledore rose his wand and cast a spell he had invented in his youth during darker days.

“Glacies Carcer!”

Harry's eyes went wide as a platform of ice spread out from the air in front of Albus at a rapid pace, freezing the ground beneath it.

His only response was to cast the modified protego and shielded himself as the arc flew into the incandescent blue light.

He threw his hands up instinctively however and as he opened his eyes, the platform grew upwards becoming a mountain of ice that very quickly grew over the top of his shield encasing him.

“Well that's a ridiculously over the top spell.” He muttered to himself as he dropped his shield.

“INCENDIA CULMEN!” He flicked his hand upwards, causing the cylinder of flames to erupt from the ground around him and instantly melt the prison, unfortunately flooding it with lukewarm water.

He cursed and put a bubblehead charm on his head and started swimming to the top of the mountain, only to find that his pillar had not reached the top.

In annoyance, he pointed his wand at the nearest wall and cast incendio. This had the effect of drilling a hole through the mountain which sucked Harry out of his prison and into the warmer air.

Dumbledore looked on in shock as a spray of water shot Harry out of the mountain who curved down in the air and rather quickly slid down the mountain awkwardly.

Harry pulled himself off of the ground that he rolled across and cast a drying charm on himself.

“I would have thought if you were trying to kill me, you’d do it a lot quicker than via pneumonia.” Harry quipped. “Is that the best you’ve got or is that the level I have to contend with?” He asked his nemesis.

Dumbledore frowned and started to say something when Harry said over the top of him. “It doesn’t matter, I don’t trust you to tell me the truth anyway.” I guess the only way I’ll know is by testing you.

He held out his hand and silently cast a spell that caused a large lightning bolt to shoot from his wand at his maximum power which shot into the older man faster than he could possibly even think to shield, the resulting bang left Harry covering his ears and trying to get rid of the ringing.

Dumbledore flew across the landscape and landed a fair distance away yet somehow managed to get himself up off the ground which in turn amazed Harry, who had hoped that the bolt would have cooked him inside out, though his whole body seemed rather shaky.

“How did you get this power?” The geriatric asked.

“That’s a bit personal isn’t it?” Harry asked with a wry grin. “Where did you get yours from?”

“Very well. I shall make you talk. You will submit to my will!”

Harry fired a diffindo at the raving man who twirled his cloak and avoided the spell. Just.

Dumbledore was looking annoyed at his state of dress and tore away from the cut at his backside, that was catching on his persona, revealing a pair of boxer shorts and an odd pair of jester shoes.

“You’ve got to be kidding, you wear that in public?” Harry asked, unsure whether to be shocked or amused.

Dumbledore was not one to be angered however and fired a petrificus totalis back at the boy.

Being one of the spells that did not need to be blocked, Harry was stuck fast, but he was able to use a finite easily enough to unstick himself.

The two mages picked up the battle once more, flinging highly dangerous spells at each other, Dumbledore was beginning to feel that the only way he might beat the younger man was to make him lose an arm or a leg as certainly, his spells to make the boy loose consciousness weren’t working.

Dumbledore was at a disadvantage with his spells because unlike the younger of the two, he couldn’t cast spells designed to kill. Even if the prophecy was false and Harry could be killed by anybody other than Voldemort, The fact remained that only Harry could kill Voldemort.

He paid for his mind wondering in the middle of battle by being stung with a number of needles that slipped past his shields and quickly sidestepped a sword dashing past him and twirled away from the sword as Harry summoned it back to his hands, hoping to impale him from behind.

“There are a number of things I do not understand old man. Why did you cause Peter to turn away from his friends and join Voldemort?” Harry asked him as he attacked once more with both a petrificus totalis and banishing his sword.

“I made Peter go to Voldemort to kick start the prophecy my boy.” Dumbledore replied after he reverted from transfiguring himself into water and back.

“Then why did you give it to Voldemort later on then if it was so important that he didn’t know?”

“Why do you think?” Dumbledore replied, standing perfectly still, waiting for the sword to return. “If you two were working together, I needed to put a wedge between you both, you are supposed to rid the world of him. He is the last Dark Lord Harry and only you can beat him.”

“I honestly don’t know where you get this bullshit from.” Harry summoned his sword which slipped past Dumbledore who added his own banishing charm to the weapon, causing it to speed up.

Harry darted to one side, making the sword miss and cast a shield to protect himself from an expelliarmus. “Voldemort can’t be the Last Dark Lord.” Flicking his hands in an inverted ‘Z’ towards the ground, caused the land to open up like an earthquake towards Dumbledore who levitated himself to avoid falling in.

“He is Harry, and he has Susan Bones. One of the star-crossed.”

“Yes, I know.” Harry replied. “But I don’t care. So what if he has one of the star-crossed; it changes nothing.”

“And what would you know of them?”

“Enough that I know that Hermione is one, and she and I together are sharing our greatest happiness. I don’t remember the rest of that prophecy but it’s not all that important. Your death will mark the start of the Last Dark Lord’s rise. I do know one thing else about the prophecy though. You are the white of the monochrome hands, and Voldemort is the black. I shall kill you both.”

Dumbledore digested his words, absentmindedly deflecting an unknown purple curse. “You believe you are the last Dark Lord?” It

sounded completely absurd. Harry Potter? The Last Dark Lord? It just wasn't possible.

But to be certain they had fought, and Harry was standing unscathed and untired, just short of breath. He was not fatigued from a lack of magic that should well and truly have been used up by now. Perhaps it was true, but if it was... He had to die. But if he did die, what would stop Voldemort from taking over?

He placed his hand on his robe where he had the pouch containing the enslavement ring. It seemed truer now than ever that this ring was the only thing that could save the world from the perpetual rule of a Dark Lord.

"We should finish this, I'm sure my wife is getting worried by now."

Dumbledore steeled his resolve. He would end this soon. The fate of the world was once more upon his shoulders as it had been fifty years ago.

.o'OoOoO'o.

Things were not going so well for the other side. While the fighters were relatively evenly matched, A giant and two wizards were not well matched against a Dragon.

An impressive battle waged between the Ex-transfiguration teacher and the herbology teacher, each using their own brand of magic against each other as McGonagall dodged literal blades of grass while simultaneously making the bucket in the well grow teeth and fly at her.

Minerva knew that this battle was pointless after Emma and Dan were both taken out of the equation and while nobody had thought to revive either of the stunned teachers, Cynwise was not having an easy time subduing Dan Granger who was proving rather adept at fighting the Vampire.

Filius and Knight were both starting to tire each other out, but theirs would be the first battle complete as Knight dodged an expelliarmus

and pulled a handgun from his robes and took careful aim and pulled the trigger.

The bullet ricocheted off the walls of Hogwarts and knight looked down in horror as a stray ethereal stake penetrated his bowels and stuck out of his back. His legs crumpling out from under him, he landed hard on the flagstones.

Filius looked on in shock and recovered quickly to help the others in subduing the dragon. With Knight out of the fight, the rest just cascaded from there.

Luna was not one for being subdued. She snapped her jaws at the wizards who were aiming at her eyes.

“Shame to be fightin’ with such a beautiful creature as yourself,” Hagrid lamented as he let loose another bolt which went straight into her neck. She immediately roared in pain and gave him her full attention, flinging her tail at him, which he caught and yanked, causing her to spin around backwards.

A twinkle caught her eye and her Dragon instincts kicked in as she flapped her wings, the gust of air knocking all but the giant over as she skipped over to the battle where everyone else was and immediately brought her jaws down on the twinkling object which just happened to be Trelawney’s upper torso with all her beads and jewellery she normally carried.

“Hagrid! Use this!” Vector conjured a large axe just in front of him.

Hagrid took the axe and ran towards the beast, swinging it at it’s leg.

Luna collapsed as her leg was detached from the rest of her body. She lifted her head and roared as Hagrid took another swing, embedding the axe deeply in her sides.

The roar of the dragon caught Cynwise’s attention and she quickly dodged another solarium spell to run at the giant. “Don’t hurt my

playmate!” She screamed at him as she jumped on his back and sank her fangs into his neck and started sucking on him.

Hagrid thrashed, even as his eyes rolled back into his head and a moment later, a solaris flashed across the field to where she was and hit her in the back. “Vampire spawn...” She heard Dan Granger say as she detached herself from the giant and fell to the ground.

He smiled in triumph which was wiped promptly from his face when he found that during the battle, they had been surrounded by werewolves, and not just a couple a huge pack of them.

Cynwise's fall was completely in Hermione's field of vision and she quickly realised that by trying to ensure that she hit Ginny perfectly as if doing so would earn her an O+ in her NEWTs, she had screwed up at protecting her friends.

“Cynwise!” She called out and immediately faced Ginny with a fire in her eyes. She held out her hand and accurately fired three spells in succession. A stunner to Ginny's left, a diffindo to her right which she blocked with a shield that shattered and a reducto that literally caused her to explode.

Ginny Weasley didn't even have time to look surprised all anybody knew is that a spray of blood covered almost everybody present.

“This fight is over.” She said menacingly, levelling her wand at Vector and casting a spell that caused her lungs to collapse.

The raw power that rolled off of her made everyone turn and stare at her as if a nundu had strolled into the fight.

The first spell, a stunner, aimed at her father made him drop from the battle like a fly.

The rest of the teachers promptly dropped their wands.

“Minerva, take my parents back to the Void and drop them in prison cells.”

McGonagall nodded and started pulling Emma closer to her husband so she could portkey them together. As she pulled her past Knight, her breath hitched and she turned her head to avoid looking at his still body.

“Remus, Fenrir, take our injured to the infirmary.” The two werewolves scampered off to tend to their wounded.

Luna took to flight and disappeared from sight with a loud bang and a puff of smoke.

“Did that Dragon just apparate?” Pomona Sprout asked in disbelief, but nobody answered her.

The werewolves closed in tighter around the captives and Hermione looked at the place where the battle had started, where Harry had stood and willed him to come back. “Come on Harry... I want my pasta.”

.o'OoOoO'o.

Dumbledore was now attacking with a ferocity that Harry had not expected and was having a hard time keeping up with, it was all he could do to shield himself from the onslaught as the older man chained spell after spell one after the other.

Slowly, Harry was being forced further back towards the ice. Though, the only way he knew that was because his arm hairs were starting to stick up from the cold. He dared not turn around behind him. That would require breaking his concentration on constantly renewing his shield.

He needed a way to end this battle soon. He considered casting a killing curse at him, but he had no doubts that if there was one thing that the bastard hadn't lied about it was this landscape claiming his life for it.

He flicked through his mind for spells that were unblockable with a shield. The earthquake hadn't worked, summoning a golem hadn't

worked, petrifying him was as useless as it being used against himself. Then a spell came to his mind.

Did he dare use it? It was so simple, yet had the chance to be the trump he needed, he just needed the right moment.

He waited until he was sure that Dumbledore was looking at him then dropped his shield suddenly, darting to his left, closing his eyes and silently cast Lumos.

Dumbledore screamed as the light burned out his eyes and Harry cast an engorgement spell at the old man with his tongue in mind.

Dumbledore however had instinctively thrown up a shield when he was blinded and in the time it took Harry to cast the blindness counterspell, Dumbledore had sent a bone breaker in the direction Harry was last seen.

The shot was incredibly aimed and would have hit Harry cleanly in the chest if he hadn't turned to cast the engorgement. Instead, the over-powered bone-breaker careened into his right arm, pulverizing it to powder.

Harry screamed in pain, even as he flew through the air, doing a double pirouette back flip and landing on his good arm with a sickening crunch as his body contacted ice.

Dumbledore darted to one side as he cast his own counter-blindness spell and saw that Harry wasn't going to get up from where he was. Neither of his arms were usable for casting spells or using his sword. The fight was his.

He marvelled at the boy's incredible power. Nobody had ever duelled him like that and if not for the premonition Trelawney had given him the day before which prompted him to take a reflex potion he wondered if perhaps he might have died.

Dumbledore tentatively walked towards his ex-charge and looked down upon him.

Harry was screaming in pain and his eyes looked like they were going to bleed the hate they showed. If looks could kill, the older mentor would have exploded like a nuclear weapon as Harry heaved his lungs and frothed saliva as he stared.

Dumbledore frowned and placed his foot on the younger man's left arm causing him to redouble his efforts.

Harry had felt the cruciatus. It was painful. Easily more painful than what he was experiencing at the moment, but the thing about the cruciatus curse was that someone could only hold it on you for a certain amount of time. This was not the case for the pain of broken bones he felt right now which would not go, even if Dumbledore left. The pain would not recede.

Dumbledore sighed wearily and reached into his badly damaged robes to pull out a collar, encrusted with 40 jewels of varying types and a number of runes written around it.

It was hard for Harry to concentrate, harder than he'd thought possible, but he had to acknowledge that whatever Dumbledore had in mind, couldn't be good for him.

'What do I do?' He asked himself. 'I can't move either arm! I can't get up, I can't move!'

As Dumbledore moved to put the collar around his neck, Harry thrashed, causing more pain, but making it difficult for him to get his hands near him and as they got close enough, Harry bit at his hands.

Dumbledore cast a petrificus on him once more which Harry threw off easily as he had before.

A flash appeared before Dumbledore and a small bird swooped him causing him to spin around.

'Release your magic human!' Wilheard commanded.

‘And DO WHAT with it!?’ Harry demanded back, wondering if the bird was even able to hear him.

Dumbledore started firing spells at the bird.

‘Do nothing! Let your intention guide it!’

With nothing else to lose, Harry did just that and magic seemed to splash out of his pours, soaking the ground and causing it to warp into something else.

The ice that it touched melted and crackled like fireworks.

As Dumbledore turned around to see the lake approaching him, he looked stunned to the point that the magic touched his feet.

Half a second later, his leg hairs started to grow uncontrollably. They touched the ground and took root, growing outwards and down, more and more of his hair travelled into a knot and started to hold him fast.

He dropped the collar wish splashed into the magic and spontaneously exploded impaling both Dumbledore and Harry with small bits of shrapnel.

The old man panicked as Harry felt his left arm knit itself together and his right arm seemed to almost inflate and the shrapnel was ejected from Harry’s body.

Soon the semi-directed magic started affecting the old goat’s beard and arm hairs which too reached the ground until Dumbledore himself was unable to move at all, he was rooted to the ground like a plant. Wandless finite magic did nothing to undo the spell in progress.

After a moment, Harry’s pain stopped and he gingerly, tentatively, raised one arm and then the other in bewilderment. “That was incredible.”

He slowly pushed himself upwards and as his black fledgling phoenix landed on his shoulder, he summoned his wand and pointed it at

Albus Dumbledore who glowered with hate towards the boy which made him grin. It was the first time he had ever seen a face that so perfectly fitted the old man.

“I have a question that’s been bothering me ever since I saw that newspaper article.”

The old man said nothing.

“I want the honest truth, and I believe I’ll know if you’re lying to me, so don’t bother.”

He levelled his wand at the older man. “Are my parents even dead? Did Voldemort really kill them?”

Dumbledore looked defeated. “No Harry. He did not. They were not in the house when Voldemort came, so I hid them.” He said it with all the sincerity he could.

Harry’s face softened. “Oh Merlin. Thank you...” He said softly.

Dumbledore ventures. “I can take you to them if you wish.”

“No...” Harry whispered. “It’s enough to know that they’re safe.” He levelled his wand at the old man and muttered a spell that Hermione had taught him. She had used it as part of his aunt’s makeover, but without the whole thing was fine too.

Dumbledore’s face went from hopeful to frightened as the hair that anchored him to the ground began intertwining and fattening, becoming scaly and green until after a moment, a snake head pulled itself from the ground.

One thought kept racing in his mind. ‘I’m sorry Dolores, I won’t be able to contend for your heart any more.’

“Kill the lying son of a bitch.” Harry instructed in their own language, which they did. ‘That bastard is completely incapable of telling the truth.’ Perhaps it was the evidence given to him in the past or the fact

that he distinctly remembered his parents coming out of Voldemort's wand years ago. But Harry knew the truth deep down. His parents were no more alive than Dumbledore would be in a few minutes.

The snake that was part of the old man's beard crept up on itself and bit him on the cheek. The old man screamed and as more bit him, the poison started flowing through his body, causing his slow death.

The world around Harry started to crack and it shattered, showing the real world behind it.

Hermione stared at Harry in disbelief as he stood there watching as more and more of his hair became serpentine. She gasped as the man's screams became nothing more than gurgles and was witness to the death of Albus Dumbledore.

A moment later, his hair was nothing more than a mass of snakes, biting and feeding the body that they were attached to, and when they were done with him, they started eating each other as they too were part of him.

"I'm sorry." Harry said softly to her. "I know that you wanted to kill him yourself, but it was about the only way I could get out of that damned thing."

"Oh god Harry, you're safe. I don't care about Dumbledore. You're safe."

"Yeah, I'm safe. I think." He patted the black phoenix on his shoulder and turned to notice that everyone was staring at him.

"Release the teachers." He ordered his werewolves who pulled away.

Harry himself was feeling bruised and battered. He'd need to have his arms checked when he got back. Still, he had other administrative issues to take care of first.

He approached Severus Snape and liked the look of horror on his face. "Dumbledore is dead. Think Voldemort will be happy or pissed?"

Severus snapped his head towards the young man, his once perfect poker face blemished by the blood draining from his face.

"You'll be missing your class tomorrow. I want you to run to your other master and give him a message from the Last Dark Lord. 'You're next.' Go."

Severus quickly edged away from the boy and ran for the gate. Even if he weren't scared of a kid that could bring down the world's most powerful wizard, Voldemort was now the only person he could turn to for safety and he had to hear about this.

"We'll return home now. Let these children grow up under their own merits." He told the teachers.

The werewolves took the hint and started portkeying away from Hogwarts.
.o'OoOoO'o.

As the couple appeared back in their cave, they found the rest of the rogues minus Minerva, but with Fenrir and Pettigrew waiting for them in the study, ready for their debriefing.

Noises indicating that there was another party happening and by the sounds of it, alcohol was not prohibited, the lightweights were already getting loud.

The first bit of news was given by Pettigrew who confirmed that an attack was well under way with Voldemort attacking the ministry, who were not faring well at all and many prisoners were being taken.

It was not unexpected news. Harry went so far as to say that it saved him the burden of ripping them down himself when he finished with Voldemort and put off the discussion until more details were known the following day.

Harry, having been in his battle with Dumbledore and unable to keep a track of what happened was more interested in what happened while he was gone.

Two near fatal injuries and Luna's injuries were about all that was sustained and the general impression was that Dumbledore's goal for the evening was purely to capture Harry no reinforcements were called at all. As was witnessed, there was an attempt on Hermione's life but it was not his main objective otherwise he would have thrown more at them.

Cynwise was lucky that Hagrid had been trying to get her off, if she'd been stationary, it wouldn't have been a miss. A solaris spell would have passed straight through her heart and definitely killed her if it had been 10 centimetres closer.

Luna would survive but she was passed out. A lack of blood wouldn't kill a vampire but the absence of any blood at all would make her healing slow.

Knight on the other hand was not in so good condition, the stake that Cynwise had dodged and found itself embedded in Knight went clean through his spine. The healers said they could heal his body, but he would never walk again.

The news came as a shock to everyone, but hit Hermione the hardest. Out of everybody there, she had hoped that her parents would just give up and join them, not fight back and almost kill two of their closest friends and allies.

Hearing the news, she had broke down crying and fled the cave. After a moment and a curious chirp, Aelred flew to join her and calm her down.

Everyone turned to Harry and asked him to retell what happened in the battle but Harry refused. "We have other more pressing issues to deal with." With that, he got up and left.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Thus far, Dan had been unable to find a way to circumvent the wards that surrounded the prison he was in.

His wife was sitting in silent thought trying to think of a way out of the cave but thus far, neither of them had any success with anything they'd tried.

They had been sitting in the cell for five hours already.

"Take your post outside please." A deep male voice came from outside of their sight.

A moment later, a young man in armour, with black hair and green eyes came down the steps and into the holding cell. They recognised the young man described by Albus as Harry Potter whom they'd last seen battling with their mentor.

"I'm sorry to have kept you both waiting." He said. "My wife and I have been waiting for this moment for almost a year."

"To do what? Torture us?"

"Not at all. Hermione has been chasing the two of you ever since we were told you'd been put in Azkaban."

"Azkaban?" Dan asked confusedly. "I've never been to Azkaban."

"No, that's for certain." Harry told them, thinking of the people he'd delivered to Voldemort. Harry pulled up a chair and sat backwards on it so he could rest his arms on the head. "You were however used as bait and a bargaining chip in order to control your daughter."

"My daughter? My daughter is dead."

"I assure you, she most definitely is not." Harry cut him off before he could open his mouth. "You've been obliviated to make you believe that. Hermione has been fighting for a long time to get you both back. She's been a fiercely devoted daughter." Harry smiled happily as his

mind wondered off on a tangent, wondering if he could be such a good father that his kids would be that devoted to him.

“There must be some mistake, she died in my arms!” Emma shouted at him. “My little baby! She died in my arms!”

“Get out.” Dan said lowly. “Do not come in here with these lies. My wife does not deserve them.”

“No. She deserves her daughter.” Harry replied.

“OUT!”

Harry shook his head in annoyance. This was not going to be easy. He turned and left, asking the guards to once more secure the place.

As he wondered back to their home he wondered if there was a way to prove to them that she was their daughter. Hadn't he heard something in school about parental testing? There was a kid at his school that had two guys fighting over being his father.

Hermione was sitting with Cynwise in the makeshift hospital.

The healers were able to do nothing for her as the young woman's body was well adapted to healing on its own.

When Harry stepped up to the healer looking after the vampire and asked her about paternity testing, she thankfully informed him that it was quite a routine happening in the magical world for the purebloods to ensure there were no 'mudbloods' influencing the line, especially where inheritance was concerned.

The news excited Harry and immediately asked for the proceedings. It would require a potion that was simple to make since all you were doing is a potion that took two sets of blood and if they were unrelated, the bloods would cause a reaction, however a parent-child bloods were typically so similar they were compatible and caused no reaction at all.

Unfortunately, none of the apocatharies nearby would be open and nobody in the void had any 'type G' pre-made potion base free.

It was one of the unavoidable facts of life. Snape would spend numerous years teaching how to make potions from scratch when a lot of them had similar bases that were often pre-prepared in bulk when you got out of school.

With that sorted out, Harry spent a few moments, wishing that Cynwise would open her eyes.

It was a while longer before the other five healers finally stepped out of their operation room and said that they'd done all they could for Knight. But only went as far as telling them that he would live.

When Harry and the others asked if they could see him, the healers told them that 'seeing' was all they could do. They did not want anybody to touch him as his body was being restrained as it healed.

The Silent Knight was breathing shallowly, but without hindrance as he lay on the bed, arms and legs strapped to avoid any movement.

"God I'm sorry..." Harry mumbled as he sat down next to them and allowed himself to wallow in worry for a few hours.
.o'OoOoO'o.

Harry hadn't slept all night, but was very glad for the distraction when the healers finally came around with the completed potion at about 11 in the morning. Hopefully this would shut up Hermione's parents.

If it weren't for who they were, Harry would have murdered them for what Dan had done to Knight.

However, as of a few hours ago, the strings on all the puppets had been released and from now onwards, however people acted would be who they were.

Hermione was hesitant to see her parents after the things they'd said and done but her husband insisted.

They appraised each other between the bars for a moment, before Dan stubbornly said. "She looks nothing like me."

"We'll see won't we." Harry said as he brought forth the three vials containing the potion. "Pick one."

Dan looked appraisingly at the man. "That one."

"Good. Hermione, a little blood in each of these if you would please." He said handing the other two to her.

Harry pushed his sword out of the sheath and rubbed his thumb across the blade enough to make it smear red and then squeezed a few drops into the vial. "This is the control."

He offered his sword to Hermione who did likewise into both of the vials.

"So one of you needs to bleed into both mine and hers, and the other can bleed into just hers. If there is a reaction, then you're not related." He told them as he handed the vial to Emma and poked his sword through the bars, allowing both of her parents to nick themselves and bleed into the vases.

Dan, being the sceptic chose to bleed in both. His vial with Hermione, as expected did nothing. The other vase however started frothing madly.

"Well, I'm not related to you." Harry said with a grin.

"How can I be sure you haven't rigged these?"

Harry rolled his eyes and gestured for the vial that hadn't reacted and put his blood in it, causing the same reaction. "Happy? She's not dead. You were lied to."

"If you really are my daughter... You would have a little star behind your ear, do you not?" Emma asked as if not believing it could possibly be true.

Hermione offered her ear as final proof that had Emma convinced that it really was her little baby grown up. Emma pulled Hermione close and hugged her through the bars.

“If we really were obliviated... Who did it?”

“Albus Dumbledore.” Harry said with a stone cold face.

“You jest!” Dan replied but the face didn’t change. “I’ll kill the bastard!”

“It’s too late for that dad...” Hermione replied. “Harry killed him last night.”

Dan went pale. “You... How... Dumbledore is...”

“I’ll be telling everybody what happened when my two friends you almost killed have recovered.” He allowed himself coldly.

“Hey, that was self defence, you attacked us first.” He replied angrily, then turned on his daughter. “And where do you get off attacking your own father like that! Didn’t I teach you better!?”

“Yes dad, you did.” She replied. “Things are a bit different now.”

“What’s different.”

“ Well...” She looked nervously at Harry. “You’re going to be grandparents.”

Dan looked at Harry with daggers in his eyes. “You knocked up my little girl!? Be thankful these bars are here, I’ll rip your head off!”

Harry sighed and shook his head in annoyance. “I didn’t ‘knock her up’, she’s my wife. I would have asked your permission, but according to the paperwork that we found after breaking into Azkaban to get you out, you were already dead.”

Emma put her hand on Dan's shoulder, who was looking like he was about to go apoplectic. "I think you should tell us your stories dear, your father will behave, won't you honey?" She shot him a meaningful glance and he calmed considerably.

It wasn't a warning, or a threat, it was a twitch of the mouth and eye that didn't really seem to mean anything to Harry, but it Dan suddenly became a lot more reasonable to deal with.

"Well then, if we're all ready to be reasonable for a bit I will allow you both out for a picnic or something." Harry suggested. "I will give fair warning though." He said as he opened the doors. "Your quarters tonight are completely dependant on your behaviour."
.o'OoOoO'o.

Over lunch, the couple described everything they could about their lives, up until this point which took almost all day.

Harry was happy to hear stories of his beloved's childhood as were her parents who were happy to hear that they had been good parents.

Any doubts that Hermione's past was incorrect or fabricated was nulled by the detail she went into with her stories and the Grangers seemed to get a bit of themselves back as they listened.

Thankfully they were very civil up until the point that Harry and Hermione described the circumstances under which their baby, tentatively named Shannon had been conceived.

Dan thought it was evil that they could possibly force a child to be a part of such a ritual but Harry and Hermione insisted that the baby was normal and as far as they could tell, completely unaffected by it and it wasn't that they were having the baby because of the potion. It really was just killing two birds with one stone.

Harry was assaulted by both of the phoenixes.

'See if I ever cry for you!' Aelred sniped at him in thought.

Hermione laughed at his plight and her smile seemed to placate her parents and there was a companionable silence until Dan brought up Ginny.

“What you did to that girl was evil. It was obvious from your level of ability you could have stunned her.”

“I won’t accept that from you dad. I’m hazarding a guess you’ve done work hunting vampires in the past, am I wrong?”

“That’s different. They’re vampires.”

Hermione slapped her head. “Good grief. Hopefully Cynwise won’t hold what you did to her against you, then you’ll see for yourself that vampires are people too you know, as are werewolves.”

“WEREWOLVES!? PEOPLE!?”

The scream echoed through The Void and brought a lot of eyes looking at him.

“Dan!” Emma sounded scandalized as she looked around nervously.

“ Did we tell you that most of the people living here are werewolves?” Harry asked with a mischievous grin on his face. He gestured to one of the kids in the distance to come and sit on his lap. Unfortunately for Harry, where one went, the rest went too and the small family were all too soon inundated with Werewolves, Harry introducing them one by one and giving whatever history he could remember on them.

By the time that most of them were introduced, Dan had a very different view on werewolves. The next step would be to get him to change his mind on Vampires.

But Harry was happy to wait until the vampires contacted him before they moved on with that phase.

Until then, it was Harry's plan to prove that despite the fact he was a Dark Lord, he wanted to give the impression he wasn't a totally bad guy.

Author's note:

Whew, long time no write. This chapter has honestly been MONTHS in the writing. Issues have come up, university stopped and started again.

Certainly the hardest part of this chapter was reading back through the whole story again and trying to find all the loose ends I need to tie up.

The responses I got to the last chapter certainly were bipolar. Some hated what I'd done, others loved it and it took me a long time before I was able to get past the bad ones and realise that I owed it to my avid readers that I do not let it get to me.

One of my reviews, from madm05 pointed out that Hermione was getting the raw deal with the ritual they'd done, so I sat and thought long and hard about what I could do for her. I ended up coming to the conclusion that Harry got more from it because it's his duty to protect both mother and child when they are unable to. I had troubles finding a way to put that into the story as it isn't something that can be realised and I didn't really give Hermione room to hypothesise it. My apologies to anyone offended by my reasoning.

This chapter has had an abbreviated proof-reading period because I've assignments that I need to finish before tomorrow.

I won't lie to any of you, the next chapter may be a while off. I have to plan for exams and stay ahead of assignments. Then once that's over and done with, I have to choose between the three possible endings I decided upon. I could slap myself silly for creating the idea of a "Last Dark Lord." as I'm looking for a better ending than to blow up earth... -;

Thanks to everyone who reviewed and offered their support, this chapter is especially for you guys and girls.

And now! On with the Omake!

--Steven

P.S. bonus points if you can spot the quote from an anime series I blatantly stole :D

Update:

There was a minor tweak in this story at Dumbledore's death. I had originally thought it clear that Dumbledore had lied about Harry's parents being dead when Harry said "Kill the lying son of a bitch." But I still had a few reviews that asked about his parents being alive. I assure you all: Harry's parents died, but it was an opportunity for Dumbledore to exploit and manipulate Harry further.

Omake #7: Don't be so overconfident

"We'll see won't we." Harry said as he brought forth the three vials containing the potion. "Pick one."

Dan looked appraisingly at the man. "That one."

"Good. Hermione, a little blood in each of these if you would please." He said handing the other two to her.

Harry pushed his sword out of the sheath and rubbed his thumb across the blade enough to make it smear red and then squeezed a few drops into the vial. "This is the control."

He offered his sword to Hermione who did likewise into both of the vials.

"So one of you needs to bleed into both mine and hers, and the other can bleed into just hers. If there is a reaction, then you're not related." He told them as he handed the vial to Emma and poked his sword through the bars, allowing both of her parents to nick themselves and bleed into the vases.

Dan, being the sceptic chose to bleed in both. His vial with Harry, started frothing madly.

“Well, I’m not related to you.” Harry said with a grin.

They all watched in shock as Hermione's too started to froth as well!

“Emma... is there something you need to tell me?” Dan asked dangerously.

Emma quickly put her blood into her vial and watched it start foaming, which made Dan turn on his anger on Harry.

Harry coughed. “Hermione love, I think we have the wrong people...”

“You mean to say that we spent two months planning an attack on Hogwarts for no reason at all!?” Hermione fumed. “What the hell are we going to do with these two impostors!”

“I ain't letting them out! That guy looks PISSED!”